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Samuel

Thomas S. Kepler, 1297-

JESUS'
DESIGN
FOR
LIVING

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JESUS' DESIGN FOR LIVING

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To
WILLIAM J. LOWSTUTER
Teacher and Friend

Preface

NO section of sacred literature has so affected mankind as the three chapters called the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). Today many—whether Christian, secularist, or of other faiths—feel that these ethical teachings are as excellent a blueprint for moral living as the centuries have produced. Men disagree regarding the theology and the Christology that lie behind these teachings; but they have unanimity that as ethical teachings the Sermon on the Mount is supreme. Its precepts summarize the best moral guidance that the human race has been privileged to know. The Christian, however, sees a theological background and a christological emphasis behind the Sermon on the Mount, which give it a momentum as a religious ethics, unique because it portrays the will of God as revealed through Jesus Christ.

In the light of careful biblical studies the Sermon on the Mount represents a collection of Jesus' highest ethical teachings; it also presents a survey of moral insights interpreted by the early Christian community to meet its needs in the light of its developing problems. While Jesus spoke the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount "before the first Easter" (where they represent the pure will of God), the compilation we have of them in the Gospel of Matthew shows them as rules of guidance for the Christian community "after the first Easter." We today belong to this continuing after-Easter community.

The pages of this book are written in the idiom of laymen, who wish to understand the meaning of the Sermon on the

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Mount. It is the author's hope that both laymen and ministers will through these devotional studies capture something of the meaning of the Sermon on the Mount for twentieth-century living.

THOMAS S. KEPLER

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1. *A Design for Living*

(MATT. 5:1-2)

He went up on the mountain, . . . and taught them.

WHILE traveling on a small Norwegian freight boat from Panama to Los Angeles, Noel Coward conceived the pattern for his play *Design for Living*. It is a play with three characters—Gilda, Otto, and Leo. About these characters Noel Coward explains:

These glib, overarticulate, and amoral creatures force their lives into fantastic shapes and problems because they cannot help themselves. Impelled chiefly by the impact of their personalities, they are like moths in a pool of light, unable to tolerate the lonely outer darkness, and equally unable to share the light without colliding constantly and bruising one another's wings.¹

Noel Coward's *Design for Living* is a secular play which describes situations in a secular world. Jesus' "design for living," however, is not a pattern that shows worldly living; it is a "sermon on the mount" which shows how Christians ought to live in the world. This short collection of 111 verses has done more than any other ethical pattern to stimulate men to think religiously, though men sometimes have not been quite sure how to use it. Rabbi Joseph Klausner says of it and the other ethical teachings of Jesus: "If ever the day should come and this ethical code be stripped of its wrappings of miracles and mysticism, the Book of the Ethics of Jesus will be one of the choicest treasures

¹ *Play Parade* (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1933).

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in the literature of Israel for all time.”² Friedrich Nietzsche swore against it, proclaiming it a slave morality for weak persons. Martin Dibelius sees it “not as an ideal but an *eschatological stimulus* intended to make men well acquainted with the pure will of God.”³ Mahatma Gandhi viewed it as the world’s finest collection of ethical teachings. No serious person in the last nineteen hundred years has been able to ignore the Sermon on the Mount.

One thing is certain. The Sermon on the Mount as a design for living is not an easy mold for people imbued with the everyday secular world. It is an ideal system of ethics meant for the disciples of Jesus, who share his belief about God and his hopes for the kingdom of God to become a reality in the world. It is a religious system of living, which portrays how transformed Christians ought to live in the world. It is not so much a collection of rules for the “new law” as a set of guides which describe the kind of inner spirit Christians should show among men. It is an *ideal* toward which Christians should be reaching. Yet its teachings compose a pattern that is a *judgment* on men when they wander from its precepts.

Ponder the central ideas of the Sermon on the Mount: “Be perfect like God! Never hate! Refrain from worry! Never have lust! Love your enemies! Do not store up earthly wealth! Never accompany the telling of truth with an oath! Never judge others!” What is a Christian to do with these standards? Are they not too absolute for anyone to consider? “The impossibility of Jesus’ radical demands does not diminish their relevance,” says Paul S. Minear. The Roman Catholic Church accepts a double standard in using these teachings: they are meant just for the priests and the nuns, who have taken religious orders, but are not to set a standard for laymen, who live in the world amidst everyday secular duties. Martin Luther and other Reformers saw these teachings on such a lofty plane that as man

² *Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1925), p. 414.

³ *The Sermon on the Mount* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1940), p. 135.

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realized he could not keep them, he would feel his despair and his defeat. Hence he would be driven to Jesus Christ and the Cross as the only hope for the salvation of his sinful self.

Leo Tolstoy viewed them as literally to be kept: he thus renounced wealth, war, and attempted to live these ideals. But his life and the lives of those in his family met failure, rather than salvation. Albert Schweitzer sees the Sermon on the Mount as an "interim ethic." He interprets Jesus as one who believed that shortly after his death he would return on the clouds as the "Son of man" to bring his kingdom into the world; thus the Sermon on the Mount is a system of ideal ethics to be kept for only a short time (the "interim") between Jesus' death and his return on the clouds. Some thinkers in the nineteenth century looked upon the Sermon on the Mount as a design that shows what we should be rather than what we should do (as though *being* and *doing* could be separated).

"Christ's ethic," says William Manson, "stands for the unattainable which we are yet bound to attain."⁴ It is a "design for living" for those who are willing to take Christian beliefs and actions seriously! It describes what life ought to be in God's kingdom. We listen to the Sermon on the Mount today because it was spoken by Christ on the Mount. What he taught on the Mount

is practicable, for the Man who first spoke these words practiced them, and the practicing of them produced a character so beautiful, so symmetrical, so compelling, so just what life ought to be, that he is as inescapable in the moral realm as the force of gravity is in the physical. . . . It is a working philosophy of life—the only one that will work. For the universe backs this way of life.⁵

⁴ *Jesus the Messiah* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1946), p. 85.

⁵ E. Stanley Jones, *The Christ of the Mount* (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1931), pp. 31, 332.

2. *To Be Simple Is to Be Great*

(MATT. 5:3)

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

RALPH W. SOCKMAN has a helpful book on the Beatitudes entitled *The Higher Happiness*. Some, however, would say that the beatitudes of Jesus, which begin with the statement "Blessed are the . . .," describe the *highest* happiness which man on earth can enjoy. Others, like Thomas Carlyle, view blessedness as transcending happiness: "There is in man a Higher than Love of Happiness: he can do without Happiness and instead thereof find Blessedness." Hugh Martin, commenting on this, remarks: "Happiness, we might say, depends on the things that *happen* to us. Blessedness is deeper, it is a matter of character, it can transmute what happens."¹

Matthew lists eight beatitudes, while Luke mentions four. Jesus undoubtedly used other illustrations of the Christian life in terms of the "beatitude" type of living. The Sermon on the Mount is not just one sermon delivered by Jesus; it is a collection of central ideas stressed by Jesus on various occasions, brought together in Matt. 5-7. The beatitudes here listed are various illustrations as to how a Christian personality ought to express himself in Christian living. J. B. Phillips translates "blessed" as "how happy"; another translator expresses "blessed" as "Oh, the happiness of. . . ." "The Beatitudes of Jesus describe the character of men who, living under God's Fatherly Rule made manifest in Jesus, enjoy that happiness even here and now, though its perfection belongs to the heavenly world."² As the beauty of a rainbow radiates a variety of colors in its

¹ *The Beatitudes* (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1952), p. 9.

² Archibald M. Hunter, *A Pattern for Life* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), p. 30.

glory, so the Beatitudes effulge the various traits which a Christian personality should possess.

If pride is defined as the cardinal sin of man, those "poor in spirit" compose people who feel their "absolute dependence upon God." Luke says, "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God" (6:20), but Matthew seems to give the deeper spiritual meaning: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (5:3). Poverty of material things is no blessing in itself, for often persons in wretched material conditions are driven to theft and other crimes. But a person who is poor in spirit possesses a virtue, whereby he feels his utter need of God's Spirit to supplement his own frailty. Whether a person has poverty or wealth, his blessedness is to be found in the way by which he relates his life to God's. Those "poor in spirit" have found deep value in simplicity of living, as compared with those who in their false grandeur and selfish pride have lost themselves in luxury and wasteful living.

Henry David Thoreau in *Walden* says, "Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity! I say, let your affairs be as two or three, and not a hundred or a thousand. . . . Simplify, simplify." Emerson wrote, "Nothing is more simple than greatness; indeed, to be simple is to be great." While proud men create their own gods which they worship, simple men put their trust and dependence on God. The funeral of William Allen White was that of a simple man. First Corinthians 13 was read, followed by the playing of the "Moonlight Sonata," and the Lord's Prayer was prayed. After the service a little boy was heard to ask, "Why so many flowers?" Another lad replied, "Because he was a very great man." André Maurois, in commenting upon White's greatness, said, "He was indeed a very great man, a man who understood that true greatness is composed of the simplest ingredients: love of country, of a city, of a family, of a profession."

"The greatest truths are the simplest; and so are the greatest men." John D. Rockefeller once said, "The poorest man

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I know is the man who has nothing but money." The greatness of this financier lay not in the fact that he possessed millions of dollars, but that he realized himself an instrument through whom millions of dollars might be used for philanthropic purposes. If an individual is to possess the peace of God, he must possess a proper disinterest in the material things of the world and see them as means, rather than ends, of purposeful living. The secret of the great saints lay in the fact that they referred both the small and the great things of life to God; they were "God-centered." Thus, being "poor in spirit," with a feeling of dependence upon God, they were able to cherish the kingdom of heaven as God's gift to them.

Jesus' own life, that of one who "emptied himself, taking the form of a servant" (Phil. 2:7), exemplifies the rewards of those who are poor in spirit:

My Master was so very poor,
A manger was His cradling place;
So very rich my Master was
Kings came from far
To gain His grace.

My Master was so very poor
And with the poor He broke the bread;
So very rich my Master was
That multitudes
By Him were fed.

My Master was so very poor
They nailed Him to a naked cross;
So very rich my Master was
He gave His all
And knew no loss.^a

^a Harry Lee, "My Master Was So Very Poor." Used by permission.

3. *Where Pity Dwells, the Peace of God Is There*

(MATT. 5:4)

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

MIGUEL DE UNAMUNO sees the spirit of mourning as the true test of a real philosopher: "The only real philosopher is one who lives and suffers and feels in the world and thus obtains a tragic sense of living because of his compassion for human suffering." ¹ He sees this note of mourning for others in lives like those of Marcus Aurelius, Augustine, Pascal, Rousseau, Amiel, Kierkegaard. H. A. Overstreet views those who have no ability to mourn for others as "bores": "A bore is one who is never able to place himself at your point of interest. . . . He is never one who goes forth to meet your interest, consider it, help modify it, build it up, or understandingly tear it down." ²

In Luke, Jesus addresses the beatitudes in the second person, giving to them a personal touch; in Matthew they are focused in the third person to people in a group. "Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh" (6:21) is the Lukan version. Both Matthew and Luke, however, imply that the reward for mourning or weeping comes to those who are sorry for their own sins as well as for the wrongs committed by others; it is a moral universe in which God's mercy with joy and comfort rewards our personal sorrow for our wrongs. It is an ethical world in which as we sympathize with others, we share God's peace within our hearts. Whittier has correctly said, "Where pity dwells, the peace of God is there." By contrast, the caloused and self-centered person knows inner hardness of heart that lends him unhappiness and frustration as life's sorrows come upon him.

¹ *The Tragic Sense of Life in Men and in Peoples* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1921).

² *About Ourselves* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1927), p. 268.

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"A grief," says Ralph W. Sockman, "is a sorrow one carries in his heart; a grievance is a chip one carries on his shoulder." Sympathy and empathy are twins in the experience of mourning. As we possess sympathy for a person, we are sorry for his wretched condition; when we have empathy, we place ourselves in a person's situation and try to understand how he feels in his circumstance. When Gene Debs was released from the federal prison at Atlanta for his convictions against war, he said, "As long as any man is in prison, I am in prison; as long as any man is in chains, I am not free." Roy Burkhart, minister of the Community Church, Columbus, Ohio, enlists his parishioners to aid him in counseling people in sorrow. He uses a mother who has victoriously overcome the bitter sorrow of losing a son in war to comfort a parent who has just received the news of a boy "lost in action." He employs one who has conquered the vice of alcohol to counsel a person in defeat because of alcoholism.

Jesus was one who wept over Jerusalem, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!" (Luke 13:34). He felt that if Jerusalem had been able to mourn for her sins, he had a message of peace and comfort for her. His followers, however, felt that he had brought to their personal sorrows a note of comfort. They understood Jesus' words and spirit as reflected in the Gospel of John: "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever. . . . The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you" (John: 14:16, 26-27, K.J.V.).

The Beatitudes are not meant for people with no concern for the Christian religion. They are spoken to persons who believe in God as one who is deeply concerned for his children; they are directed to those who believe that Jesus' words reflect the will of God. Not all who mourn are comforted. A father

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may mourn for the death of his child, but his heart may be filled with bitterness as he says, "Why did this happen to me!" Such mourning only increases the unbearable sorrow and widens the gap between God and the person. It brings no comfort, and a laugh that only rings with hardened cynicism. But those who mourn with God at their side, and who have the faith to thrust their hand into his, know the meaning of blessedness.

A letter by Phillips Brooks to a parishioner who had lost his wife shows the meaning for a Christian of "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted":

233 Clarendon Street,
Boston, Nov. 19th, 1891

My dear Friend,

I have thought much about our meeting last Sunday, and the few words we had together. May I try to tell you again where your comfort lies? It is not in forgetting the happy past. People bring us well-meant but miserable consolation when they tell us what *time* will do to our grief. We do not want to lose our grief, because our grief is bound up with our love and we could not cease to mourn without being robbed of our affection. But if you know—as you do know—that the great and awful change, which has come into your life and brought you such distress, has brought your dear wife the joy of heaven, can you not, in the midst of all your suffering, rejoice for her? And if knowing she is with God, you can be with God, too, and every day claim His protection and try to do His will, may you not still in spirit be very near to her?

She is not dead, but living, and if you are sure what care is holding her, and educating her, you can be very contentedly with her in spirit, and look forward confidently to the day when you shall also go to God and be with her. I know that this does not take away your pain—no one can do that—you do not want any one to do that—not even God, but it can help you to bear it, to be brave and cheerful, to do your duty, and to live the Pure, Earnest, Spiritual life which she, in heaven, wishes you to live. . . . My dear friend, she is yours forever. God never takes away what

He has once given. May He make you worthy of her! May He comfort you, and make you strong!

Your friend, sincerely,
Phillips Brooks

4. Humility—The True Cure for Many a Needless Heartache

(MATT. 5:5)

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

IN this brave new world of atomic research," wrote Sydney J. Harris, columnist of the *Chicago Daily News*, "how can we give reverence to those who extract energy from the atom, and not to him who put the energy there?" Certainly an atomic age ought to breed humility in the breasts of men as they consider the tremendous and infinite power of God. The Sermon on the Mount seeks to help men to know God's power through humility and meekness.

"The meek" in this beatitude does not refer to weak people, passive people, those who feel a sense of inferiority. The statement can be paraphrased, "Oh, how happy are those who have humility, for they shall inherit all the good things of the kingdom of God." Meekness as humility is a virtue, the opposite of pride and arrogance. Whereas arrogant people usually corrode themselves with pride, for they feel in their insecurity an inferiority complex, humble people with their centeredness in God possess a virtue that makes them strong. Humility and confidence are friendly; they go together. Humility and pride clash, as they are enemies. The proud man pushes God aside and says, "I am self-sufficient"—thus he cannot inherit the good things of the Kingdom. Nor are humility and humiliation similar; humiliation makes a person feel small in a negative, hurt manner, while humility causes a person to feel himself in a

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constructive way a little creature who is a child of God. "Humility is the true cure for many a needless heartache," wrote Sir Arthur Helps, for it keeps man's little self centered in God.

The teaching of this beatitude is found in Ps. 37:11:

But the meek shall possess the land,
and delight themselves in abundant prosperity.

To "possess the land" usually meant in the Old Testament the Promised Land. Before it was inhabited by the Israelites, there was the struggle and the hardship of the wilderness. The parallel may be seen in Jesus' promise to those who are meek or humble: the reward does not always come easily and without struggle; but in the end God gives the good things of the Kingdom to the humble who are willing to receive them.

Cicero once wrote, "The higher we are placed, the more humbly should we walk." Is not humility one of the virtues which accompany good men in high positions? Jesus said, "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted" (Matt. 23:12). Jesus himself was a living parable of the meek inheriting the earth. Paul says:

Being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:8-11).

Humble people see themselves as instruments through whom God gives the rewards of his kingdom. George Washington Carver started each day with meditation, so that as he entered the chemical laboratory, God's power and wisdom might function through him as a chemist—great insights into the potentialities of the simple peanut and sweet potato resulted. Ralph Waldo Emerson as a writer often felt that what he was writing was not being written just by himself, but that God as the

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Over-Soul was writing through Emerson—great essays and inspirational poetry were composed. A leading businessman once said that as he went to his desk each day, he included these words in his meditation, "God, this business belongs to you. Though I am the president of this corporation, I am working for you. May your Spirit guide me and direct me this day in my decisions, my relationships to all people. May what is done in this great organization be pleasing to you."

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Nicholas of Cusa felt himself under "the gaze of God." As people share this kind of experience, God's wisdom, power, and love can thus function through them—they will then understand how the meek shall inherit the earth. A Persian prayer beautifully expresses the meaning of meekness and humility:

Lord, who art merciful as well as just,
Incline Thine ear, to me, a child of dust.
Not what I would, O Lord, I offer Thee,

Alas! but what I can.

Father Almighty, who hast made me man,
And bade me look to heav'n, for Thou art there,
Accept my sacrifice and humble prayer:

Four things, which are in Thy treasury,
I lay before Thee, Lord, with this petition:

My nothingness, my wants, my sin, and my contrition.¹

5. *Full Fed and Yet I Hunger*

(MATT. 5:6)

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

I ONCE taught in a college where in the chapel the Bible on the altar was always opened to Isaiah 55, the favorite chapter of one of the college's presidents. In the first

¹ Translated by Robert Southey.

two verses of this glorious chapter the eyes of the reader would meet these words:

Ho, every one who thirsts,
 come to the waters;
 and he who has no money,
 come, buy and eat!
 Come, buy wine and milk
 without money and without price.
 Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,
 and your labor for that which does not satisfy?
 Hearken diligently to me, and eat what is good,
 and delight yourselves in fatness.

What Isaiah in his poetic way invites man to participate in, Jesus in his simple way promises—"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." Both Isaiah and Jesus are asserting that in this universe men can be spiritually nourished; yet in the same universe they can be physically full, though spiritually empty.

Alfred Noyes describes this dual condition:

I am full-fed and yet
 I hunger!
 Who set this fiercer famine in my maw? . . .
 Who set this deeper hunger in my heart? ¹

And in another poem, Gamaliel Bradford expresses this "hunger and thirst for righteousness":

My one unchanged obsession, wheresoc'er my feet have trod,
 Is a keen, enormous, haunting, never-sated thirst for God.²

About this spiritual hunger mentioned by Jesus, Hugh Martin

¹ From "Encladus," *Collected Poems*, Vol. I (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1909). Copyright 1913, 1941, by Alfred Noyes. Used by permission of J. B. Lippincott Co. and William Blackwood & Sons, Ltd.

² From "God," *Shadow Verses* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1920). Used by permission of the publishers.

says, "This hunger is not the gnawing of starvation, or the fruitless hunger of the prodigal in the far country. It is the healthful appetite of children at their father's table. The supply is proportioned to the hunger. . . . But before God can feed the souls there must be hunger." ³

Before man can attain spiritual stature, he must have a desire to be a spiritual giant. Man needs yearning and perseverance in religion as in other walks of life. Paderewski did not become a concert pianist except by a hunger to be a great concert artist. "Anyone who takes up piano-playing," he said, "with a view to becoming a professional pianist has taken on himself an awful burden. But it is better than the drudgery of giving pianoforte lessons. The one is purgatory, but the other is hell!" For five years Paderewski suffered torments of starved aspiration and thwarted ambition; he taught when he should have been studying. He married, only to lose his wife by death within a year. Finally in despair, the pedagogue turned pupil; he studied madly for two years under the great Lechetizky in Vienna, practicing eighteen hours a day. If Paderewski had not *hungered and thirsted* for the ideal to become a great artist, he would not have attained his goal. The same is true in the realm of religion; spiritual satisfaction comes only to those who want it and are willing to strive for it.

Brother Lawrence was a footman and a soldier, who in 1666 at fifty-five years of age became a lay member of the Barefooted Carmelites in Paris; here he worked in the kitchen as "a servant of the servants of God." He hungered and thirsted for righteousness, and only after ten years of spiritual discipline did he see every task as a sacred duty. His own words portray his spiritual satisfaction after the long search: "Work is my prayer. . . . The time of business does not with me differ from the time of prayer; and in the noise and clutter of the kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquillity as if I were upon my knees at the blessed sacrament." Brother Lawrence is a living parable

³ Op. cit., pp. 49, 50.

MERCY IS FOR THE MERCIFUL

of Jesus' words that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness can find spiritual satisfaction.

Luke has Jesus say, "Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be satisfied" (6:21), in which he implies that physical hunger is the way to spiritual fulfillment. Luke's version infers that through poverty and hunger man finds a spiritual discipline which brings spiritual satisfaction; and inversely that wealth and physical gorging keep God away from man. Fifty years ago William James in his Gifford Lectures stated this viewpoint: "Poverty indeed is the strenuous life. . . . One wonders whether a revival of the belief that poverty is a worthy vocation may not be the spiritual reform which our time stands most in need of." The difficulty is, however, that physical hunger can lead to despair, bitterness, and ill health, as well as to spiritual deepening. The main purport of this beatitude of Jesus moves into the world of spiritual things and stresses hunger for righteousness as the primary goal of people, rich or poor.

Several years ago when I compiled my studies on devotional classics entitled *The Fellowship of the Saints*, I wrote regarding the saints: "Many of us are missing the 'feast of the Kingdom' which they have enjoyed so thoroughly! Do we not too often satisfy our spiritual hunger with crumbs from the table of God, when we might, like the saints, richly participate in the banquet which God so freely offers us?" Jesus teaches that we can be spiritually satisfied if we come with deep spiritual hunger to God's festive table!

6. *Mercy Is for the Merciful*

(MATT. 5:7)

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

SELDOM has there been a greater call for mercy than at the present hour: Western Germany has 9,000,000

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refugees; there are 800,000 refugees in Arab countries, 700,000 in Greece, 300,000 in Austria. The setting in Palestine in which Jesus uttered his beatitude about mercy was somewhat similar to present-day conditions: Those who tilled small farms made only enough to supply food for themselves, with a small profit left to buy the necessities of life. One or two bad seasons would compel a farmer to lose his land. A farmer thus deprived of his holdings would be forced into the status of a hireling or laborer. Wealthy persons often took these farm possessions, when the poorer class could not pay back the loans to them. Taxes paid both to Rome and to the Temple kept many people poverty-stricken.

Palestine thus came to possess a class of poor, destitute, and unemployed, and landless peasants, side by side with a class of wealthy farmers, great landed proprietors and rich bankers. The former waxed poorer, sinking into mendicancy, crushed and depressed, hoping for miracles, filling the streets of town and village with beggary and piety or (in the case of the more robust) with brigandage, highway-robbery and revolt; outcasts, haunting the caves and desert places and the rocks and the crevices of the mountains.¹

Thousands in their need were hungry for mercy. There were many instances where men could show mercy.

To such a "life situation" Jesus' words had real meaning: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Mercy was a quality urged upon man by the prophet Micah:

He has showed you, O man, what is good;
and what does the Lord require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?
(Mic. 6:8)

Hosea the prophet sees God as one who will give his mercy to a repentant nation. To Ephraim, God says:

¹ Klausner, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

MERCY IS FOR THE MERCIFUL

How can I give you up, O Ephraim!
How can I hand you over, O Israel!
How can I make you like Admah!
How can I treat you like Zeboiim!
My heart recoils within me,
my compassion grows warm and tender.
I will not execute my fierce anger,
I will not again destroy Ephraim;
for I am God and not man,
the Holy One in your midst,
and I will not come to destroy.
(Hos. 11:8-9)

Jesus illustrates what mercy means as he tells the story of the good Samaritan: Anyone (even though of mixed Jewish-Gentile culture, like the good Samaritan) who shows mercy to one in need is worthy of the kingdom of God (Luke 10:29-37). Mercy is one of the weightier matters of the law (Matt. 23:23).

"Mercy is for the merciful," said Lord Byron. Man cannot expect mercy from God unless he shares this mercy with his fellow men. Man is an instrument through which God's unselfish love channels itself into the lives of other persons. Man's greatest achievements have been accomplished when he has attempted them for the sake of love, rather than for the sake of gain or reputation. Mark Twain took twelve years in preparation of his *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc*, published in 1896. Of it he said, "I like the *Joan of Arc* best of all my books, and it is the best; I know it perfectly well. Possibly the book may not sell [though usually his books would sell forty thousand copies before publication], but that is nothing—it was written for love. The others needed no preparation and got none." To delete his pride in the publishing of the book, he used a pseudonym, *Sieur Louis de Comte*, the secretary and page of Joan. Life's greatest spiritual joys, like this accomplishment of Mark Twain, come when a person performs acts of mercy, with no expectancy of reward. God's unselfish love can focus itself only through unselfish, merciful persons. We do not

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"earn" God's love by being merciful; rather God's mercy is a by-product, which pours itself into unselfish, loving persons.

Swedish religious thinkers from the universities of Uppsala and Lund have made unique contributions in the last thirty years to the meaning of Christian love (agape), which is akin to mercy. They have described it as a divine love, which desires to put value into persons and their environments. It thus differs from ordinary love (eros), a human love which wishes to get value from other persons and objects. When man, out of his right relationship with God, is energized by God's mercy (agape), he then is merciful toward others.

On his deathbed Nathan Söderblom, a Swedish theologian at Uppsala, said, "I know that God lives, I can prove it by the history of religions." Of all the illustrations in the religions of the world, however, Jesus stands out as the one great proof of God's mercy, and as a living illustration of his teaching, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." His own unselfish, generous life has intrigued many to pray the spirit of Alexander Pope's prayer:

Teach me to feel another's woe,
To hide the fault I see;
That mercy I to others show,
That mercy show to me.²

7. *The Stream Is Always Purer at Its Source*

(MATT. 5:8)

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

MANY people dissipate their energies because they lack single-mindedness and sincerity; their lives are frustrated and enervated because they lack purity of intention.

² "Universal Prayer."

THE STREAM IS ALWAYS PURER AT ITS SOURCE

Alfred Tennyson clearly states how purity of heart (or sincerity) brings strength for great living, as Sir Galahad speaks:

My strength is as the strength of ten,
Because my heart is pure.

A man's reputation is what others think about him; what he knows himself to be is his character. Character and reputation coincide in a single-minded person who has sincerity. Jesus criticized some of the Pharisees because they cleansed the outside of the cup, while the inside of the cup remained dirty; they lacked purity of heart (Luke 11:39).

The word "heart" is used more than 830 times in the Bible, usually meaning the whole personality, the mind as well as the emotions. A wise proverb says:

Keep your heart with all vigilance;
for from it flow the springs of life.
(Prov. 4:23)

In a similar note Blaise Pascal in his *Thoughts* wrote, "The stream is always purer at its source." In reflection similar to that of this beatitude of Jesus the psalmist has sung:

Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord?
And who shall stand in his holy place?
He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
who does not lift up his soul to what is false,
and does not swear deceitfully.
(Ps. 24:3-4)

To "see God" means to have spiritual fellowship with him, to feel a mystical oneness with him. Jesus' words may intend to say that the pure in heart will "see God" in the coming new age; but his teachings continued to emphasize that the joy and peace and power of the "new age" have already begun for his followers. If a person is to "see God," his sincerity must start

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within himself. He needs to refrain from the experience of the man who said to himself:

Within my earthly temple there's a crowd;
There's one of us that's humble, one that's proud,
There's one that's broken-hearted for his sins,
There's one that unrepentant sits and grins;
There's one that loves his neighbor as himself,
And one that cares for naught but fame and pelf.
From much corroding care I should be free
If I could once determine which is me.¹

Without sincerity or purity of heart life degenerates into sham and hypocrisy. Instead of being real men and women in the real drama of life, we become merely play actors in an unreal tragic farce on this planet. Evelyn Underhill points to three basic hungers to be satisfied for a complete life: (1) a craving for something beyond this world, which makes man feel as a stranger or a sojourner on this earth; (2) a craving of heart for heart, which makes him a lover; (3) a craving for inward purity and perfection, which makes some men saints. A saint in the Roman Catholic Church is formally beatified (made blessed) before he is made a saint; he is called "blessed" because of his having lived a holy life on earth, or having died a heroic death; he is thus now enjoying "heaven." Jesus' beatitude infers that the quality of "heaven," the "seeing of God," should begin on earth for his followers.

While Puritanism began in the sixteenth century as a purifying of English Protestantism of its forms and ceremonies, it soon became a term associated with strict morality, especially against the theater, card playing, dancing, and misuse of the Sabbath. This type of "puritanism" sometimes lacked sincerity or purity of heart; it was more concerned with pious observances than with the radiant and loving heart of the individual. Such puritanism savored of hypocrisy, akin to the type that

¹ Edward S. Martin, "My Name Is Legion," *Masterpieces of Religious Verse* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1948), p. 274. Used by permission.

THAT PEACE WHICH THE WORLD CANNOT GIVE

Jesus criticized in some of the Pharisees. Alfred North Whitehead in his mature years felt that a "new Puritan age" was arriving in the world. Commenting about this, he said, "When I was a lad I can remember the word puritan being used only as a term of reproach. But now it has a very different sound." He felt that a true puritan age would be one in which sincere, creative people would lend their talents and leadership to a better world; where leaders in science, art, business, religion, education—men and women with purity of heart—might lead humanity onward into a decent and wonderful world.

We still hope for this ideal. But before we can have a decent society, we must, according to Jacques Maritain, "purify the springs of history" within individual persons. Then they can go out and improve the scenes of history in the world. "Moral dirtiness," says Alexis Carrel, "is as repulsive as physical dirtiness. Before beginning a new day, each one of us should wash morally as well as physically. Our success in carrying out the rules of behavior depends on the intensity of this interior life."² The pure in heart, who see God, possess membership in God's kingdom. Speaking about Henry Grattam, Sir James McIntosh said, "The purity of his life was the brightness of his glory." The same can be said of Jesus, for his life illustrated his words: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

8. *That Peace Which the World Cannot Give*

(MATT. 5:9)

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

AMONG the interesting books on my study shelves are *Peace of Mind* by the late Rabbi Joshua Liebman

² *Reflections on Life* (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1953), pp. 138-39.

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and *Peace of Soul* by Bishop Fulton J. Sheen. Recently Russell L. Dicks and I wrote a book called *And Peace at the Last*. Rabbi Liebman and Bishop Sheen have attempted to show how people in daily living can find peace; Russell Dicks and I have tried to help people obtain peace to face the mystery of death. Ask the average person what he wants most of all amid the vicissitudes of life, and he will most frequently answer, "Peace and serenity of spirit." Yet many are not finding this treasure.

Rabbi Hillel, brilliant teacher during Jesus' boyhood, shows the high place which Judaism places upon peace for its members: "Be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace" (Aboth 1:2). Jesus is not saying, however, that "sons of God" will be those who by their passive, otherworldly living are concerned with peace; they must be peacemakers, who in their daily lives of dynamic religious living are creating peaceful conditions about them.

The Essenes of Jesus' time believed that the kingdom of God would come by persons' living apart from the world in common dwellings, eating vegetarian meals at the same table, wearing similar white garments, having no private possessions, marrying seldom, and abiding by a common rigid daily routine of living. They lived only in Palestine, mainly around the Dead Sea, and numbered about four thousand in Jesus' time. Their primary aim through this type of ascetic life was to live in peace and to abjure everything that might bring injury to others. They hoped through this passive type of peaceful living that God's kingdom through them might come into the world. Such an ascetic pattern of peace is never sanctioned by Jesus. Jesus seems against this type of otherworldly peaceful mood as the design for living. Instead, "sons of God" must be peacemakers *in the world!* To be peaceable is not enough; his followers must be peacemakers.

Before a person can be a peacemaker in the world, he must first find peace within himself. Edward Weeks, "The Peripatetic Reviewer" in the *Atlantic monthly*, expresses the yearning of most of us: "I love quiet—so quiet that you do not look up

from your book until the log in the open fire falls apart. So I love the Sabbath, as a time to clear the mind of worries and collect one's thoughts. Sunday is the great restorer; we need such respite, and the best of the year is ahead in those twelve days from Christmas to Twelfth Night." But this love of quiet and peace is not used by "sons of God" as a means to escape permanently from the social scene of life; rather, it is used as a way by which persons can obtain new perspective of life's problems, regain mental poise and energy, find a drive to go out and create peace in the world.

Most of us need to "relax and live"! A book by this title summarizes six major principles for our incarnation, if we are to become peacemakers.¹ Its author, Joseph A. Kennedy, has helped many people find poise for living. His six suggestions are: (1) Learn to relax passively—don't live actively all the time. (2) Learn to practice rhythm between work and play. (3) Obtain a philosophy of life; take difficulties in their stride. (4) Quit speeding up; take your time; live one day at a time. (5) Eradicate attitudes of fear, futility, tension, and doubt, which defeat you. Act as if you are going to succeed. (6) Remember that relaxation can cure tension; but that there are times you ought to see your doctor.

Peacemakers must act heroically in trying to eliminate situations which endanger peace in the world. They must labor for the doing away of war, poverty, class embitterments, economic selfishness in society. But a real peacemaker must first of all display an active quality of peace, strength, and radiance in his own life. During World War II a minister friend of mine, who was not a conscientious objector, acted in his spare time as the chaplain of a "CO" camp. One day in a forum discussion on war and peace, many of the "CO" members grew embittered at the minister's view and exhibited a "nonpeace" quality within their own lives. Said one of the pacifists to the chaplain at the close of the discussion, "It seemed to me that in the group you

¹ New York: Prentice-Hall, 1953.

were the best example of one who was really a peacemaker!"

What Jesus meant by being a "son of God" as a peacemaker is well summarized by Theodore H. Robinson:

Sons of God, then, are those who manifest the God-life, do as God does, perform God's task in the world. This task is the creation of peace, which means in Semitic phraseology the promotion of general prosperity. Jesus, however, may have used the term in that more restricted sense which it has to the modern ear, for the absence of war was the primary condition of all kinds of prosperity in the ancient world. . . . The ideal of God for human society is a spiritual condition in which jealousy, rivalry, and hostility have disappeared, and a universal harmony prevails. He who is most worthy of congratulation for this true success in this difficult and complicated world of men and women is he who most perfectly succeeds in producing and upholding this harmony.²

9. *Courage Conquers All Things*

(MATT. 5:10-11)

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

COURAGE is esteemed the highest virtue, the one security to which man must cling at all times, if he is to prove his worth as a man. Judge Charles E. Wyzanski, Jr., recently spoke before two hundred editorial writers at Cambridge, Massachusetts, on "The Anatomy of Courage."¹ He discussed four kinds of courage: physical, emotional, social, spiritual. The warrior or the athlete exhibits physical courage. Emotional courage is shown when a person overcomes his

¹ *The Gospel of Matthew* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1928), pp. 31-32. Used by permission of the publishers.

² *Atlantic Monthly*, January, 1954.

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subjective fears and anxieties. Social courage is illustrated by civic groups which stand for right and progress in a community. Spiritual courage shows its great insights especially in Palestine, Greece, India, China, Persia, in the great religions of those settings, 800 B.C. to A.D. 200; it is clearly expressed in the phraseology of Isaiah, "remembered the Rock of your refuge" (17:10). It is also clearly defined in the beatitude of Jesus, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

The original setting in which Jesus says these words refers to his disciples who will share in the kingdom which God is to bring into history. Jesus knows that suffering and persecution cannot be escaped by those who follow him. The same is true today in every area of life. Without courage no new accomplishments occur. Charles A. Lindbergh reflects on aviation's hazards in *The Spirit of Saint Louis*:

I'm not bound to be in aviation at all. I'm here only because I love the sky and flying more than anything else on earth. Of course there's danger, but a certain amount of danger is essential to the quality of life. I don't believe in taking foolish chances; but nothing can be accomplished without taking any chance at all.²

Surely the same is true of moral and spiritual courage. The implication of Jesus' teachings on religion is that people should be morally upright without expecting a reward for being good; but the nature of the universe in which we live is that God does reward people for being courageous for righteous purposes. William James, who suffered frequently within and often battled for emotional courage, once said, "Every sort of endurance, of courage and capacity for handling life's evils, is set free in those who have religious faith." J. A. Hadfield speaks in similar words, "Speaking as a student of psychotherapy, who as such has no concern for theology, I am convinced that the Christian religion is one of the most valuable and potent influences that we possess for producing that harmony and peace

² New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953.

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of mind and that confidence of soul which is needed to bring health and power to a large proportion of nervous patients." While many of our difficulties are battles fought for righteousness within ourselves, there are problems thrust upon us by the world about us which we must face with courage.

H. M. Tomlinson speaks of the kind of spiritual courage which faces defeat, such as Jesus needed against his enemies: "Courage in strife is common enough; even the dogs have it. But the courage which can face ultimate defeat of a life of goodwill, that is different; that is victory." Jesus possessed such a courage on the cross, when he said to his enemies, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." He also experienced the blessedness which comes when a person is persecuted for righteousness' sake, as he prayed, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit!" Jesus himself was a living parable of this beatitude.

History is full of persons who know the rewards of God as they face difficulties for the cause of right: To Isaiah the Lord speaks:

Fear not, for I am with you,
be not dismayed, for I am your God;
I will strengthen you, I will help you,
I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.
(Isa. 41:10)

As Paul faces his trial before Caesar, a voice says to him, "Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and lo, God has granted you all those who sail with you" (Acts 27:24). Plautus paraphrased Jesus' words, "Courage comprises all things; a man with courage has every blessing." Robert Louis Stevenson, himself a victim of continuous suffering, saw the primacy of courage: "Courage is the footstool of the virtues, upon which they stand."

The world today needs people who are willing to be persecuted for righteousness' sake. They need *intellectual courage*, by which they tell the truth, even though the truth is unpopular.

REAL JOY IS A SERIOUS MATTER

Today's heretics often are tomorrow's saints. They need *physical* courage at times, when persecuted. But most of all they need *moral* courage, the willingness to be faithful to a cause. Such courage members of the evangelical church showed in recent years in Nazi Germany. Similar courage is needed today in American Christianity as its members labor with God for peace, freedom of speech, decency in politics, better economic relations, a closer friendship among people of different creeds and cultures. The value of such courage is sung in words by Amelia Earhart, the first woman to cross the Atlantic in an airplane, who later was lost on a Pacific flight in July, 1937:

Courage is the price that Life exacts for granting peace.
The soul that knows it not
Knows no release from little things:
Knows not the livid loneliness of fear,
Nor mountain heights where bitter joy can hear
The sound of wings.

How can Life grant us boon of living, compensate
For dull gray ugliness and pregnant hate
Unless we dare
The soul's dominion? Each time we make a choice, we pay
With courage to behold resistless day,
And count it fair.³

10. *Real Joy Is a Serious Matter*

(MATT. 5:12)

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.

SENECA and Jesus were born in the same year (4 B.C.). Like Jesus, Seneca was a great religious teacher. Banished to Corsica in 41 by the emperor Claudius, he was

³ From "Courage," 20 Hours, 40 Minutes. Copyright 1928 by G. P. Putnam's Sons. Used by permission of the publishers.

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recalled in 49 to become the tutor of Domitius, who later became the emperor Nero. He acted as one of Nero's advisers, and held great influence during the earlier years of Nero's reign, only to have Nero turn against him in 65, when Nero ordered Seneca to commit suicide. Tacitus describes the closing moments of Seneca's life:

He turned to his friends and said that he would leave to them the one thing, and yet the best thing, that he had to leave—the pattern of his life. . . . At the same time he reminded his weeping friends of their duty to be strong, now by his conversation, now by sterner rebuke, asking them what had become of the precepts of wisdom, of the philosophy which through so many years they had studied in face of impending evils. . . . Then he embraced his wife and, with a tenderness somewhat in contrast to his fortitude, entreated her to moderate her grief and not to nurse it for ever, but in the contemplation of a well-spent life to find honourable consolation for the loss of her husband.¹

Surely we ought to listen to Seneca's words with intent sincerity, when he says, "Real joy, believe me, is a serious matter." Seneca ought to know what he is saying.

Similarly, we listen with equal or even greater interest to Jesus' words about our rejoicing in time of persecution. Prophets like Amos, Isaiah, and Jeremiah had known the meaning of suffering for a great religious cause. Yet Isaiah could say, "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation" (12:3). Jeremiah and Amos undoubtedly knew the spirit of the psalmist:

Weeping may tarry for the night,
but joy comes with the morning.
(Ps. 30:5)

What Jesus is teaching during his ministry about joy in time of difficulty is echoed twenty-five years later in Paul's words to the

¹ *Annales*, XV. 62, 63.

REAL JOY IS A SERIOUS MATTER

Corinthian church: "I have great confidence in you; I have great pride in you; I am filled with comfort. With all our affliction, I am overjoyed" (II Cor. 7:4). Later when Paul writes to the Philippians, as he awaits his trial before Nero, he continues to say, "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. . . . Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice" (Phil. 3:1; 4:4).

In the summer of 1949 a group of eighteen esteemed citizens met at Westchester Country Club at Rye, New York, for the express purpose of answering the question "Can religion bring us happiness and joy?" Among their valuable conclusions they said: "Happiness is possible as one is able to relate oneself to the world in love and thought. . . . Religious faith has more to do with happiness for the individual than anything else. . . . Self-sacrifice is necessary for happiness. . . . Suffering is not good in itself, but it shifts our expectation for happiness from without to within." Such statements echo Jesus' teachings about joy as a deep religious quality. Napoleon and Helen Keller in their contrasting types of lives vividly illustrate the views of Jesus and the findings of the Westchester Country Club conference. Said Napoleon amidst his power, position, and glory, "I have never known six happy days in my life." Helen Keller exclaimed from her state of being blind, deaf, and dumb, "I have found life so beautiful!" Joy is an inner state which is a reward for our religious loyalties.

We need to guard ourselves at times against American cults of religion which express this thesis: "Be good and you will be successful. Prayer can increase your material success. With this new success you will possess a superabundance of joy." One of their pamphlets which came recently to my desk contained these words: "You may find the Power of God and actually use it to bring to you and yours, *While you are alive*, a superabundance of happiness, peace, comfort, financial security, domestic happiness—in fact everything for your own good now." For the payment of a sum of money I could enroll in the course which guaranteed superprosperity and superjoy. Jesus' teaching about our being able to "rejoice and be exceed-

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ing glad, for your reward is great in heaven" is not offering quite the same reward as this cult. Jesus is saying that, in spite of persecution and difficult surroundings, joy can be a by-product for those who find the meaning of the kingdom of God. He is not saying that one must have material prosperity to attain joy; he is stressing in his poetic way what Sara Teasdale teaches in her words:

I found more joy in sorrow
Than you could find in joy.²

Rabbi Claude Montefiore views Jesus' teaching that joy can come out of travail and persecution as "distinctive of Christianity and of its saints and apostles and martyrs. And doubtless many thousands of humble sufferers have risen superior to their troubles and afflictions through the memory and influence of the Beatitudes."³ The reward a Christian obtains from religion comes not by going in search of joy and happiness, but as a by-product of his close companionship with God in Christlike living. "Happiness is essentially a state of going somewhere, wholeheartedly, one-directionally, without regret or reservation,"⁴ says William H. Sheldon. This "state of going somewhere" Jesus described in terms of the kingdom of God.

11. Salt Seasons All Things

(MATT. 5:13)

You are the salt of the earth.

As man emerged from the nomadic stage to the agricultural period, the use of salt became necessary. As long

² From "The Answer," *Collected Poems*. Copyright 1915. Used by permission of The Macmillan Co.

³ *The Synoptic Gospels* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1927), p. 44.

⁴ *Psychology and the Promethean Will* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1936), p. 9.

as man lived on milk and raw flesh, he needed no salt; there are Bedouin tribes today who live without salt. With the advance of culture, salt became one of the most vital minerals in the life of men. Salt was offered to the gods; covenants were made with salt (Num. 18:19); cakes of salt were used for money (as in Abyssinia, Africa, Tibet); in the Orient high taxes were often placed on salt; among Orientals today salt is used at meals as a symbol of binding friendship; in Persia a disloyal man is said to be "untrue to salt."

When Jesus says to his disciples, "You are the salt of the earth," he is using a figure of speech with many meanings in various cultures of the world. As John Floro says in *Second Frutes*, "Salt seasons all things," Jesus sees his disciples as individuals who must add right flavor to the world. As salt adds zest and taste to food, Jesus' followers must add vitality and moral depth to their environments; they must rise above cultural mediocrity. As salt is often employed as a preservative of meat and other foodstuffs, so Jesus' friends must preserve the world from degenerating into moral staleness. As salt is a symbol for binding a covenant, so must his disciples continue to carry on the "new covenant" between God and men, as initially illustrated by Jesus. As salt is precious and so valuable that a small amount is all that is needed to make food tasteful, so are Jesus' disciples, though small in number, to penetrate into the culture of the world and cause it to savor of God's kingdom.

Church history is full of numerous Christians who have been "the salt of the earth": In the third century Cyprian guided the Christians of North Africa through the persecutions of the Roman rulers Decius and Valerian. Benedict of Nursia in the sixth century, through his development of a realistic monastic system, created a means by which Christian values were preserved during the Dark Ages. Martin Luther in the sixteenth century brought back the Bible as the center of Christian religious authority; the teachings of this book have added zest to rich spiritual living. Lancelot Andrewes in seventeenth-century England, amid the turbulences of King James I, wrote

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his *Private Devotions*, a devotional classic which is esteemed by some as the purest insight into the repentant soul of man. In the seventeenth century George Fox, a lay leather worker who became a religious reformer, added savor to his age in England, and began the Quaker movement. John Wesley in the eighteenth century, as he preached to thousands of people in England, added a new vitality to the villages of England. Cardinal John Henry Newman said that where Wesley had once visited towns in England, the children were better mannered, the homes better kept, the families as a whole more happy. All these Christian reformers have been "the salt of the earth."

One needs only to call the names of modern Christians to realize how twentieth-century disciples continue to be "the salt of the earth": Edith Cavell as a nurse in Europe; Jane Addams working among the underprivileged in Hull House, Chicago; Albert Schweitzer as a medical missionary in equatorial South Africa; Frank Laubach teaching languages to the illiterates on the island of Mindanao; Charles F. Andrews as a Christian teacher in India; Rudolf Otto as a great teacher of the "holiness of God" in Marburg University, Germany; Rufus Jones the Quaker as chairman of the American Friends Committee, lending its aid to sufferers throughout the world.

Jesus, however, warned his disciples not to lose their "saltiness," for then they would be good for nothing. But where do they obtain their "taste"? Is it not from their right relationships to God? Is it not in following the ways of Jesus himself? As salt can be mixed with the earth and lose its taste, so Christians can become absorbed in the secularism of the world, and thus add no zest, flavor, or worth to the world. Christians and their religion must act today as "the salt of the earth." Arnold Toynbee felt for a while that religion was the enemy of civilization; then he graduated to the position that religion was the servant of civilization; and finally he concluded that civilization was meant for the sake of religion. As such the Christian religion is "the salt of the earth"; civilization cannot get along without it.

12. *Light, the Prime Work of God*

(MATT. 5:14-16)

You are the light of the world.

E. R. GOODENOUGH has written a volume on Philo Judaeus entitled *By Light, Light*. Philo, who was a Jewish contemporary of Jesus and whose setting was in Alexandria, Egypt, did much to join Jewish ideas with Greek thought. Philo saw divine Light, when applied to God, as having a moral content. God is the "Spiritual Sun," before whom the darkness of passion and evil is dispersed. In the Old Testament light is often used in relationship to religious values: Ps. 18:28 says of God, "The Lord my God lightens my darkness." The Law and the Temple are spoken of as "light" (Prov. 6:23; Ps. 119:105; Isa. 2:5). The great rabbis were called the "light of Israel."

Thus as Jesus says to his disciples, "You are the light of the world," he is using an illustration common in his day. There is a great mystery about light: It travels 186,000 miles per second; the sun, from which our planet receives its light, is 93,000,000 miles away. The sun has a mass 330,000 times that of the earth; the diameter of the sun is 864,000 miles, while the diameter of the earth is about 4,000 miles. And yet our sun, with its light which nourishes life on our planet, is a midget sun as compared with other, much vaster suns in the universe. Furthermore our sun is traveling 12½ miles a second, or about 1,000,000 miles a day; yet some suns are traveling sixteen times as fast as our sun. Light is a mystery! Yet, as John Milton says in *Samson Agonistes*, "Light is the prime work of God."

As Isaiah writes to the exiles in Babylonia in the sixth century before the Christian era, so Jesus speaks to his disciples. Isaiah describes the purpose of Israel as the Servant of the Lord, when the Lord says:

I will give you as a light to the nations,
that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth (49:6).

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Jesus speaks to his friends, "You are the light of the world. . . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

Adolf Deissmann wrote in 1909 a book entitled *Light from the East*, in which he says:

"Light from the East"—it is a curious title for the book, but before you censure it just look for a moment at the Eastern sunshine. . . . Let but a single beam of the Eastern sun peep through a chink of the door into the darkness of a poor Panagia chapel: a dawning begins a sparkling and quickening; the one beam seems to wax twofold, tenfold; day breaks, you take in the pious meaning of the wall frescoes and the inscribed words, and the miserable poverty that built the shrine is forgotten. Make that sunbeam your own and take it with you to the scene of your labours on the other side of the Alps. . . . If you have been found worthy to study the sacred Scriptures the sunbeam will reanimate the apostles and evangelists, will bring out with greater distinctness the august figure of the Redeemer from the East, Him whom the Church is bound to reverence and to obey.¹

Jesus himself brought new spiritual light into the world; he was called "the light of the world." To those who found his way as a guide for living, he continues to say, "He who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12). He expected his followers to show their spiritual light to others, that through them others might be led to God. Jacob Boehme, called the "inspired shoemaker" of Silesia, thought of "God as Light," and believed that as God has revealed his light in Jesus Christ, so should it enlighten the lives of those who followed the Master. "There are moments," he said "when the soul sees God as in a flash of lightning. I am only a very little spark of God's light, but He is now pleased in this last time to reveal through me what has been partly concealed from the beginning of the world." One of his friends

¹ (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1921), p. xv. Used by permission of the publisher.

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describes Jacob Boehme in these words: "He was gentle in manner, modest in words, humble in conduct, patient in suffering and meek in heart. His spirit was highly illuminated of God beyond anything Nature could produce."

Was it not with such traits that Jesus expected his disciples to live and thus to let their light shine before others? Light gives life; without light our crops would not grow; our planet would be a lifeless orb; human and plant life would be non-existent. Light gives growth; it heals; it supplies energy. And so it is with the Christian gospel; to its followers it brings spiritual health, growth, power. Instead of hiding their lights in a world of much darkness, they are to radiate their "good news" to others. Jesus' words to his disciples are paraphrased in a modern slogan: "It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness."

13. Faith Is the Force of Life

(MATT. 5:17-20)

I have come not to abolish [the Law and the Prophets] . . . but to fulfill them.

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES is speaking in *The Professor at the Breakfast Table*: "Faith, as an intellectual state, is self-reliance. Faith always implies the disbelief of a lesser fact in favor of a greater. A little mind often sees the unbelief, without seeing the belief of large ones." Jesus once said to a crowd, "If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move hence to yonder place,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you" (Matt. 17:20). In similar viewpoint Leo Tolstoy wrote in his *Confessions*, "Faith is the force of life."

The Gospel of Matthew does not see Christ as one who is "the end of the law" (Rom. 10:4). Rather, it sees him as one who has shown how the Law and the Prophets can come to

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their deepest fulfillment: namely, by touching the inner spirit of man with faith. The Gospel of Matthew sees Jesus as the Messiah-Teacher, who brings a gospel of faith to the "New Israel," composed of his followers, who become the Church. As Moses received his revelation of the Law on the mountaintop of Sinai, so Jesus preaches his "new law" from the mountain-side; thus it is called the "Sermon on the Mount." As the books of Moses are five in number (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy), so in the "new Torah" there are five teachings about the "new law" (Matt. 5-7, the *Sermon on the Mount*; Matt. 10, *Rules for the Apostles*; Matt. 13, *Explanation of the Mystery of the Kingdom*; Matt. 18, *Rules for the Church*; Matt. 24-25, *Explanation About the Future*). Furthermore, Matthew's portrait shows thirteen times how Jesus is one in whom the Prophets are fulfilled: he is born in Bethlehem of Judah to fulfill the prophecy of Micah (5:2-6); he is born of a virgin to fulfill the predictions of Isaiah (7:14, K.J.V.); he flees with his parents into Egypt to fulfill the prophet Hosea (2:15); he speaks mysteries in parables to fulfill the words of Isaiah (13:14).

Christianity never began as a religion men were to *build* by keeping a set of ethical rules. Rather, it started as a movement in which as men were transformed by their right relationship with God, they would live in right relationships with their fellow men. It is a religion in which men are saved by faith, rather than by a set of ethical rules. There are many people today searching for such a religion in which "faith is the force of life." Beverly Nichols in his earlier years depicted a person who saw the futility of faith: "Faith is no more a virtue than an ear for music; you either have it or you don't." Then later he began to see what the possession of faith meant:

Sometimes I would wander into a little church and sit in an old wooden pew at the back, feeling an extraordinary happiness steal over me. . . . After one of my walks I came home and read again for the first time in years, the Gospel according to St. Mark.

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As the sublime story unfolded itself, I kept whispering to myself, "If only it were true—if only it were true!" . . . There and then I decided to do a little honest theological research. I went to London and came back with a suitcase full of books. The next few months were among the most exciting I have ever known, for they were really a treasure hunt—a hunt through history and the prize at the end was Faith. . . . Christianity is not a manmade system, like Communism, which can be assessed in a court of law. For its mystical fulfillment it demands from its followers a leap into the dark, a leap that leads from darkness to light.¹

The rabbis of Jesus' time felt that the Law of Moses needed further spiritual interpretation; these oral interpretations of the Law are referred to in the New Testament as "the tradition of the elders." They later became the Talmud. In similar fashion, Jesus is described as one who wished to add further interpretation to the Law of Moses, not to destroy it. For example, he said that murder begins with the spirit of hate; adultery starts with a lustful glance at a woman; truth telling has its genesis in a person's saying "yes" or "no"; reconciliation of two persons begins not by retaliation, but by nonresistance of one who is evil; brotherhood is defined not in loving your neighbor and hating your enemy, but in loving your enemies and praying for those who persecute you (Matt. 5:21-44). Thus by a higher righteousness of faith, as compared with the legalism of the scribes and the Pharisees, Jesus demands that his followers must live on a higher plane of religion, where "faith is the force of life."

Bishop F. Gerald Ensley in speaking on "A Faith for Today" says that "modern man needs a faith that is consistent with science, strong enough to control science, and brave enough to go beyond science." Those who have taken Jesus' design for living seriously, and have seen what Christian faith really

¹ Condensed article "Consider the Evidence" in *Reader's Digest*, April, 1951. From *All I Could Never Be* (London: Jonathan Cape, Ltd., 1949). Used by permission of Jonathan Cape, Ltd., the British Book Centre, and *Reader's Digest*.

means, discern what Clement of Alexandria meant in the third century when he said that faith leads to knowledge, knowledge to love, and that love unites the knower and the known. Jesus' attitude toward law and faith leads to such a conclusion, for in the mathematics of the Spirit, if you subtract faith, you multiply fears; but if you add faith, you multiply God's help, which divides itself into love, wisdom, and power. By such a righteousness men "enter into the kingdom of heaven." B. W. Bacon saw deeply into Jesus' attitude that "faith is the force of life": "The Sermon is not legislative, but prophetic. It does not enact but interprets. It does not lay down rules, but opens up principles." ²

14. *In Living for Others I Am Burned Away*

(MATT. 5:21-26)

First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

MEN who will not sacrifice reputation or energy for a cause or an idea will sometimes lose their lives for a person. Alexis Carrel in his *Reflections on Life* comments on this idea:

One will sacrifice oneself for one's family or friends, for one's leader, for one's country or for God, but not for an idea. The martyrs who died for Christ would not have given their lives for the natural law. . . . Unfortunately, most modern men are incapable of acting for the love of their neighbors, of their country or of God, for the only thing they love is themselves.¹

² *The Sermon on the Mount* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1902), p. 109.

¹ P. 135.

IN LIVING FOR OTHERS I AM BURNED AWAY

One of the signs that the Kingdom has come into a person's life is seen in the willingness of a person to graduate from self-centeredness into the giving of himself for a cause or another individual.

There are two contrasting ways by which a person may react toward his fellow men: One is to have revenge and anger toward his brother; the other is to lose himself in the needs of others, and to help others regardless of the way they treat him. The epitaph on the grave of Dr. Adam Clarke, great English Bible expositor, expresses the higher Christian way of living: "In living for others I am burned away."

Jesus is saying that sacrifices upon the altar have no meaning unless one is willing to live sacrificially for his fellow men. If a person has anger or hatred toward a neighbor, while in the act of worship, the worship is meaningless; man's unselfish attitude while in worship must correspond with man's unselfish attitude toward his fellow men. Motives which underlay sacrificial worship in Judaism in Jesus' day were: (1) the offering of gifts to God; (2) a means to pave communion with God; (3) a way of finding release for wrongs committed. Through the offerings the worshiper hoped to find atonement (at-one-ment) with God. But Jesus is saying with the rabbis of his time and with the Hebrew prophets that atonement with God cannot be separated from atonement with one's fellow men.

Different types of offerings were made in the Judaism of Jesus' time. *Burnt offerings* were public sacrifices for the community; people hoped that with the "sweet savor unto the Lord" these sacrifices would nourish God. *Peace offerings* were made to promote peace with God. Though usually made privately, they were also given publicly at the Pentecostal Feast and at the consecration of priests. *Sin offerings* were made to atone for sins committed in ignorance. *Guilt offerings* were given to expiate for money withheld from man or God. *Meal offerings* and *drink offerings* were made by priests to nourish God. All these offerings are of no use, Jesus is saying, unless before a man makes them (or has them made for him

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by the priests) he has made right amends with his fellow men.

The teachings of the Sermon on the Mount vary from the secular teachings of the world. They are revolutionary; they are absolute; they offer deep and penetrating criticism of life as it is ordinarily lived in the world. The real sacrifice in the Christian faith is incarnate in a person who says to himself, "In living for others I am burned away." Jesus expressed it in this way, "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." The life of Gertrude Cone illustrates this principle: Active in Christian education in China, she gave her life as a martyr on February 22, 1952, because of the pressures put on her by Communism. In her last days in her weakened condition she said to her friends: "I couldn't preach, I couldn't talk to people; but I could pray for them. So I never ceased to pray for my Chinese friends. I have no hatred or bitterness in my heart."

In commenting on her friend, who in living for others had burned her life away, Dr. Ruth Davies writes:

The funeral service for Gertrude Cone was held in Hongkong on February 22, 1952. It seems a striking coincidence that the day which marked the end of her earthly experience is the day when we remember a man whose life is for all Americans a symbol of the freedom for which our country was founded. As George Washington lived in dedication to the ideal of freedom for the human individual, so did Gertrude live, and die a martyr's death, in the light of her conviction that the soul of man has a right to freedom of choice—freedom to aspire instead of slavishly obey, freedom to love instead of hate.

Speaking at her funeral, Bishop Ralph A. Ward said, "Martyrdom is but incidental to purpose. The finest souls do not dramatize their sufferings nor seek to be martyrs. They but offer themselves, for better, for worse."

What became a living parable in the life of Gertrude Cone illustrates the heart of Jesus' saying regarding the sincerity of sacrificial worship. It exemplifies what James A. Froude, nine-

teenth-century English historian, had in mind: "Sacrifice is the first element of religion, and resolves itself in theological language into the love of God."

15. *No True Freedom Without Virtue*

(MATT. 5:27-30)

If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away.

THE Stoic philosopher Epictetus was exiled to Nicopolis about A.D. 90 by the Roman emperor Domitian. Though not a Christian, Epictetus held to many of the great Christian virtues. He believed that all men were sons of God, and that "apart from the will there is nothing good or bad." The enslaved man is he who is chained to his lower passions. "No bad man is free," he said, "and no man is free who is not master of himself." In similar words Charles Kingsley wrote, "There will be no true freedom without virtue." In our modern time Lecomte du Noüy says, "Liberty was given to man by God. This is true in every realm, physical as well as moral, and condemns certain doctrines on the same grounds as dictatorships. Liberty is not only a privilege; it is a test."¹

Jesus, with his insight into human nature, saw that many persons were enslaved to their passions, not merely in sinful acts, but in their inner evil thoughts. Taking the illustration of adultery, he interpreted the act as beginning in the lustful thought. They whose minds concentrate on lustful objects are already victims of their carnal passions. Epictetus the Stoic agreed with Jesus, as did the rabbis who said, "Everyone who looks at a woman lustfully is as though he had lain with her." Since it is the eye which relates the soul of man to the object of lust, Jesus in dramatic fashion says: "If your eye causes you

¹ *Human Destiny* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., Inc., 1947), p. 118.

to sin, pluck it out and throw it away." This is not a statement to be taken literally, but an oriental hyperbole that says: "Let no member of your body interfere with your spiritual freedom, which can find its moral basis in the atmosphere of God's Spirit." It is his striking way of saying that it is far worse to have a maimed spirit than a maimed body; freedom is worth any sacrifice.

If a person is to have the privilege of freedom, his life must resort to spiritual discipline. Samuel Butler's *The Way of All Flesh* is a commentary on human experience. Ernest, the son of a hypocritical ministerial father, rebels against the ministry to which he is ordained; his earlier life is sensually enslaved in his relations to a Miss Maitland, a prostitute, and his father's servant girl, Ellen. It is only after he is left a fortune by his aunt, whereby he can be able to turn his mind to literary achievements, that he realizes the worth and happiness of life. Earlier experiences had taught him that there is no true freedom without virtue. The athlete must train daily for the Olympic Games; the writer must write with careful discipline each day, if he is ever to write his great play; the concert artist must practice constantly, if he is to become a finished instrument of music to his audience. The same is true of anyone who wishes to find membership in God's kingdom. "Man is free to violate every natural law," says Alexis Carrel, "but by effort of will he can control even his deepest impulses."

Man possesses two kinds of freedom: (1) *Psychological freedom*, whereby he is able to make choices of relatively good objects. As a person looks through a library of ten new books, he has "psychological freedom" to choose which of the books he will read; he employs the same freedom as he votes for candidates at the polls. (2) *Ethical freedom*, however, is a different type of freedom, whereby a person makes a choice between alternatives which are morally good and bad. "Shall I steal or not?" a tempted person asks himself. Within his breast there is a battleground in which he must make the decision. If he chooses not to steal, he has thereby increased his use of free-

dom; if he decides to steal, he has increased his enslavement to his lower passions.

The American commonwealth is formed on the basis that men are free. Alfred North Whitehead has said that during the first three centuries, under Christian influence, freedom began her march; that freedom through the centuries has been retarded, but never stopped. Jesus' teachings about the high cost of spiritual freedom in his Sermon on the Mount have given to his followers the high discipline which free men must accept. In *The American Canon*, Daniel L. Marsh shows how our great articles of freedom compose for us a "Bible": (1) The Genesis of American democracy is the Mayflower Pact; (2) our *Exodus* into our new country is the Declaration of Independence; (3) the Constitution of the United States composes the Law; (4) *Prophecies* are seen in writings like Washington's Farewell Address; (5) *Psalms* are contained in songs like "The Star-Spangled Banner"; (6) the Gospel of true Americanism is found in Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address; (7) *Epistles* are observed in articles like the last one written by Woodrow Wilson, "The Road Away from Revolution," in which he said: "The sum of our whole matter is this, that our civilization cannot survive materially unless it is redeemed spiritually. It can be saved only by becoming permeated with the spirit of Christ, and being made free and happy by the practices which spring out of that spirit."

No nation can have true freedom without virtue, nor can an individual possess free will without moral uprightness. James Oppenheim describes where true freedom lies:

His slavery was not in the chains,
But in himself. . . .

They can only set free men free . . .
And there is no need of that:
Free men set themselves free.²

² From "The Slave." Used by permission.

16. *It Is Not Marriage That Fails*

(MATT. 5:31-32)

Every one who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, makes her an adulteress.

THE divorce rate in the United States is appalling: In 1951 there were 1,594,904 marriages; in the same year there were 371,000 divorces; one out of 4.3 marriages ended in the divorce court. At the turn of the century, in 1900, there were 709,000 marriages, with 55,751 divorces; one in 12.6 of the marriages was unsuccessful. Thus in the twentieth century the divorce rate has tripled in the United States. World War II increased the fatality of marriages. In one county seat in August, 1944, the clerk reported 81 marriage applications and 78 divorce actions; in the same county there had been 30 divorces in 1941, 40 in 1942, and 80 in 1943.

What to do about divorce has always been a problem. Jesus in his teachings, however, gives a new status to womanhood, and diminishes the ease with which man might divorce her. The Mosaic Law (Deut. 24:1) had clarified the position of woman, so that when she was divorced, she could receive a writ of divorcement; this meant that her husband could not retract her, and that she was free to remarry. Though a woman could not divorce her husband, she could through an action of the court command that he divorce her. This divorce could be demanded if the husband had certain diseases, if he forced her to make detestable vows, or if he practiced a wrong vocation. The Mosaic Law read: "When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her," he might divorce her. But how could an "indecency" be defined? Shammai and his disciples defined "indecency" in terms of immodesty and unchastity; Hillel and his disciples saw it in terms of such small infractions as a wife's burning her husband's food.

IT IS NOT MARRIAGE THAT FAILS

Harry Emerson Fosdick, in speaking about the difficulty of marriage in our modern life, says, "It is not marriage that fails; it is people that fail. All that marriage does is to show people up." Jesus in his teachings on marriage gives womanhood a new position; she is not a chattel which can be put off easily by her husband. In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is against all divorces: "He said to them, 'Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her'" (Mark 10:11). Amid developments within the Christian communities, special legislation needed to be made on special cases, with divorce being given on the basis of unchastity (Matt. 5:31-32). The early church thus aligned itself with the teachings of Rabbi Shammai. "The Gospel of Matthew," writes Benjamin W. Robinson, "introduces an element not found in the other Gospels. Any man who sends away his wife, 'except for unchastity,' is a trespasser. This addition of Matthew's reflects a period in the early Church when Christians were trying to find exact rules of conduct in the sayings of Jesus. To them it seemed that Jesus must have made such an exception to his rule against divorce."¹

"It is not marriage that fails; it is people that fail," and figures show that those who turn to the teachings of Jesus fail less in their marriage relations. Wherein one out of 4.3 marriages ends in divorce in the United States, only one marriage in 50 fails where couples have casual church relations, and but one in 113 marriages ends in divorce where husband and wife are members of the same church. A recent Gallup Poll shows ten reasons for marital difficulties: money, rearing children, liquor, infidelity, in-laws and relatives, late hours, leisure time, trivial things, selfishness, lack of religious faith. In summarizing conclusions of a conference on "What the American Family Faces," held in August, 1942, at the University of Chicago, Leland Foster Wood said: "I hold that religion, using the name of God, and of other great Christian concepts in the intimate fellowship of the family, should be an inarticulate part of home living rather than being a mere inference."

¹ *The Sayings of Jesus* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1930), p. 165.

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Amos Alonzo Stagg, famous football coach, on his thirty-seventh wedding anniversary gave out "seven ways to be happy though married": (1) Play the fifty-fifty game. Help the wife with the dishes, and she will help you with your charts and the signals. (2) Apply the rules of good sportsmanship to your married life. And that means follow the Golden Rule. (3) Be mutually unselfish. (4) Have mutual confidence. Keep no secrets from one another, and let no jealousy creep in. (5) Never complain. Be cheerful. (6) Have children. A family without children is not normal, and the views of one or both of the couples are apt to become warped without children. (7) Work together. Find your happiness at home and in your play together. The couple that spends all their lives looking for pleasure won't find it.

Jesus in his teachings regarding divorce gave to womanhood a new dignity, reaffirmed the divine ideal of marriage as a union that ought not to be dissolved (Gen. 2:23-24), laid the basis for woman's sharing a standard of morality with man. He gave a new spirit of love to the companionship of a married man and woman, made evident in "A Wedding Hymn" of Thomas Tiplady:

Jesus, stand beside them
On this day of days,
That in happy wedlock
They may live always.

Join their hands together,
And their hearts make one;
Guard the troth now plighted
And the life begun.

On their pleasant homestead
Let Thy radiance rest;
Making joy and sorrow
By Thy presence blest.

NO LEGACY IS SO RICH AS HONESTY

Gild their common duties
With a light divine,
As, in Cana, water
Thou didst change to wine.

Leave them nor forsake them;
Ever be their Friend;
Guarding, guiding, blessing
To their journey's end.²

17. *No Legacy Is So Rich as Honesty*

(MATT. 5:33-37)

Let what you say be simply "Yes" or "No"; anything more than this comes from evil.

HONESTY is man's cardinal virtue. Said John Lyly, a sixteenth-century dramatist, "He that loseth his honesty, hath nothing else to lose." His more famous contemporary, William Shakespeare, has Mariana in *All's Well That Ends Well* remark, "No legacy is so rich as honesty." In saying to his followers that "yes" or "no" is sufficient response to constitute truth, Jesus is hitting at the double attitude toward truth in his time: If a person accompanied his statement with an oath, it was legally binding; if he did not swear an oath, the truth was not binding. Truth is of one kind for God, Jesus is implying. "Man cannot swear without interfering with the rights of God, for in swearing he disposes of God as the witness of his oath."¹

The taking of oaths was a common practice in Judaism, as it is today in our courts. Sometimes the person taking the oath would merely raise his hand unto God (Ezek. 20:5-6); sometimes he would place his hand on the thigh of the person to whom the promise was made, as a symbol that posterity would

² Used by permission of the author.

¹ Martin Dibelius, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

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guard the oath (Gen. 24:2); at other times the oath was made before the altar (I Kings 8:31), occasionally with the slaying of an animal (Gen. 15:8-18). If a person swore falsely by God, he profaned His name (Lev. 6:3; 19:12); and a person was never asked to take oath by the name of a false God (Josh. 23:7). A judicial oath, which is enjoined by God, is lawful (Exod. 22:1). Against this background of oath taking, however, Jesus is saying that oaths are not needed; "yes" or "no" constitutes truth. Taking Jesus' words literally, Christian groups such as the Quakers, the Mennonites, and the Anabaptists have refused to take oaths in public courts.

Truth telling in the American scene has been in grave jeopardy. We hear the politician make his great promises as to what he will accomplish when once in office; but once elected, he forgets his campaigning words. Attend a criminal court trial, and hear a person whose life is tinged with crime, and whose only hope is to escape punishment, give his testimony of truth upon the Bible. We feel that such oaths are meaningless, that truth telling with an oath is merely a pretense. Colleges occasionally have the honor code in which the student writes after his examination paper: "I have neither given nor received help in the taking of this examination."

While Jesus' words were against taking oaths, under the first Christian Roman emperor, Constantine, every witness was required to take an oath. Bishops and other clergy were forced to take oaths at ordination or in the assuming of monastic vows. As the Jew held in his hand the scroll of the Law or the prayer box (phylactery), so the Christian followed custom by taking his oath on the Gospels, by kissing the Book (established in England), touching relics upon the altar, or swearing of the oath at the altar as the Bible was faced.

Interesting oath formulas are found in the Christian tradition: Provincial governors during the time of Justinian swore, "I swear by God Almighty, and His only begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, and the Most Holy Glorious Mother of God and ever Virgin Mary, and by the Four Gospels

which I hold in my hand, and by the Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel." The oath of kings Louis and Charles at Strasbourg in A.D. 842 was: "By God's love and the Christian people and our common salvation, as God shall give me knowledge and power. . . ." Witnesses in the English law courts usually give an oath: "The evidence you shall give . . . shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. So help you God."

Exceptions to the taking of the oath were cared for by the Oaths Acts of 1888, which stated that "every person upon objecting to being sworn, and stating, as the ground of such objection, either that he has no religious belief, or that the taking of a religious oath is contrary to his religious belief, shall be permitted to make his solemn confirmation instead of taking an oath." Atheists and religious groups such as the Quakers, Mennonites, and Anabaptists were thus cared for, though they made an affirmation that they were telling the truth. In 1909 the Oaths Act provided a universal practice for the Christian: He swears on the Bible, holding up the New Testament in his right hand, the hand and his head being uncovered.

Jesus in speaking about truth telling is implying that men are always in the presence of God, whether they swear by it or not; and that truth in the heart and on the lips is the basic essential for Christians. "To interpret Jesus' words as an absolute prohibition of an oath in any circumstances, as the Anabaptists, the Quakers and Tolstoy have done, is to confound the letter with the spirit. Once again, it is the principle that matters: this is not a law."²

Whether truth telling be accompanied by an oath, an affirmation, or neither, truth is one. For the Christian it is obtaining the spirit of one who was called "the Spirit of Truth."

O Christ, the Way, the Truth, the Life,
Show me the living way,
That in the tumult and the strife
I may not go astray.

² Archibald M. Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

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Teach me Thy Truth, O Christ, my Light,
The Truth that makes me free,
That in the darkness and the night
My trust shall be in Thee.

The Life that Thou alone canst give,
Impart in love to me,
That I may in Thy presence live,
And ever be like Thee.³

18. *A Power That Sets Men Free*

(MATT. 5:38-42)

Do not resist one who is evil.

I RECENTLY heard a lecture by Charles Braden, in which with colored slides he related his trip around the world. As he came to the slide which showed the simple room where Gandhi had lived, he said, "This is my most precious slide, for it shows the simple man who by humility and non-resistance, rather than by force, won freedom from the British for India." Gandhi, though a non-Christian, deemed the Sermon on the Mount the world's finest code of ethics. He was a living parable of "a power that sets men free." While Jesus' teachings regarding nonresistance were meant for person-to-person relations, Gandhi was able to translate them into terms of a man against a nation!

Before the time of Jesus, the *lex talionis* (law of retaliation) had been in effect. The Code of Hammurabi in ancient Babylonia, the Roman law and the Jewish law of Jesus' time, stressed "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." Before the law of retaliation, men in their lower morality had not even observed "an eye for an eye"; an injury might be repaid with death!

³ George L. Squier, "O Christ, the Way," *Masterpieces of Religious Verse* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1948). Used by permission.

Though in Jesus' day some rabbis allowed an injury to be recompensed with money, the law of retaliation was nevertheless evident.

Does Jesus mean for his listeners to take literally his illustrations of nonresistance? Or is he resorting to dramatic figures of speech (called oriental hyperboles) to get the attention of those who heard him? Should a man go the second mile? Should one turn the other cheek when slapped on one cheek? Should an individual give his cloak as well as his coat? In the light of Jesus' ideal of God's kingdom, Jesus is literally saying that it is better to practice nonresistance than to pay evil for evil. A Roman soldier could compel one of a conquered nation to carry his baggage; Jesus' reference to the second mile means that Christians are willing to do more than is expected of them by their enemies. A blow on the right cheek, given severely by the back of a person's hand, anticipated the blow on the left cheek by the enemy's palm. Jesus is intimating that the turning of the other cheek, instead of retaliating with a blow on the enemy's cheek, is a means to shame the enemy for his brutality. The giving of a cloak, the garment which the traveler used at night as his covering from the weather, illustrates that a follower of Jesus is willing to suffer "to the limit"!

The "man on the street" hears such teachings and evaluates them as foolishness. The Christian asks today: Do such axioms teach lessons to the enemy who performs such cruel acts? Says Montefiore:

Jesus, perhaps one-sidedly, is really thinking much more of the doer than of the recipient; that is to say, in this particular passage he is not thinking so much of the redemption of the evil doer as he is thinking of the ideal conduct for those who have to do with the evil doer, or, generally, of the ideal for man. Still less is he thinking of society as a whole and of the effect of not resisting evil upon the state.¹

¹ *The Old Testament and After* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1923), p. 248.

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While the taking of mistreatment from an enemy is not a happy experience, does it spiritually enrich the harmed person more than the seeking of revenge? "Revenge is not sweet," says George Buttrick, "despite the proverb: it is poison, strife breeding strife on endless circle."² It is said that "it costs a lot to get even with a person who harms you." *Life* magazine carried an article which said that getting even might ruin a person's health: "The chief personality characteristic of persons with hypertension [high blood pressure] is resentment. When resentment is chronic, chronic hypertension and heart trouble follow." While there is the question as to how nonresistance affects the enemy, there is little doubt that the going of the second mile, the giving of the cloak also, and the turning of the other cheek deepen a Christian's character. Such attitudes do not come easily for the ordinary Christian; they are "signs" of the Kingdom when it comes into a person's life; they also act as judgments which control a Christian's action when he wanders into revenge and resentment. "The Christian must live and act. What he needs is a standard and not a description of his daily life. He looks on the New Testament to discover not precisely what to do, but how to act. And this holds good for the Sermon on the Mount."

To practice nonresistance instead of seeking revenge has a mysterious effect on a person's personality; it is "a power that sets men free." Anger and resentment, jealousy and hatred, sap a person's energy, and enslave men to their passions. Nonresistance aids men to breathe the exhilarating spiritual air of freedom, and lends them great power to accomplish the first-rate things of life. Frederick K. Stamm has recently said, "Jesus is not a theory, but a living Reality"; his insights into the soul of man release for the individual a power for adventurous living.

² *The Interpreter's Bible* (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press), VII, 301.

19. *Ideals Are Like Stars*

(MATT. 5:43-48)

You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

THE Sermon on the Mount is not meant for people content with worldly living; as a design for living it represents ideals which Christians ought to use as guideposts to make the secular world more sacred. To the secular person, Jesus' invitation for one to "be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" seems but a wild statement. Such a person exclaims: "How can a person like me become perfect like God! I cannot even live up to the ideals of my lodge or my service club!"

Luke has a slightly different invitation from Jesus' lips: "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful" (6:36). While "merciful" and "perfect" are not exactly synonyms, each is admonishing man to become like God in his living. The sayings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, as spoken to his disciples before his death and resurrection, are "signs" as to how people in the kingdom of heaven should live. "Collected and brought together in a slightly elaborated form in the summary called the Sermon on the Mount, the sayings became rules by which the Christians were to prepare themselves for the membership in that Kingdom and for a life 'in Christ' meanwhile."¹ These absolute teachings are the Christian's hope; and at the same time a judgment upon him when he wanders from their guidance.

Christianity is a religion which is ever urging man to be and do his best. Its ideals are like stars—man can never touch them, yet they continue to guide him along the way to his destination, no matter how dark it sometimes may be at his feet. Theodore Parker saw man as an idealist: "Every man has at times in his mind the ideal of what he should be, but is not. Man never falls so low that he can see nothing higher than himself." Some

¹ Martin Dibelius, *op. cit.*, pp. 102-3.

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modern theologians look upon ideals as evil, since they are merely the projections of proud men. But the ideals of the Sermon on the Mount are not just human ideals; they are spoken by one who is revealing the wisdom of God to men. To "be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" is a divine invitation to courageous Christians.

As God wants his children to be perfect like himself, human parents often wish their children to follow their ideals. Dean W. R. Inge writes about his sons: "I fear Edward is as idle at Oxford as he was at Shrewsbury, and the College may tell me they have had enough of him. Craufurd, too, though he has ability, seems to have no ambition. It is a great disappointment to me, who hoped something from the Churton heredity, which for three generations has not failed to produce scholars and divines."² Jesus in a similar fashion implies that God is expecting Christians to be their best, to become like God himself. Most of all, our love must be like that of God, which radiates itself to all people, causing his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sending his rain on the just and the unjust (Matt. 5:45).

I can visualize Edna St. Vincent Millay attempting to perfect her poem "Renascence"; or see a young English writer named Bernard Shaw writing several thousand words each morning, because he wants to become a great writer; or imagine Ludwig van Beethoven as a young man trying to compose his first symphony; or watch Phillips Brooks, after his discouragement as a teacher, preaching his first sermon with the best of his efforts; or picture a young Oxford student, John Wesley, and his friends in their daily "methodical" devotions, because they want to mature spiritually. Life at its best is always striving toward perfection, for ideals of people are stars to guide them to their goals or destinations.

John Wesley wrote a classic called *Christian Perfection*. He believed that man is capable of achieving Christian perfection.

² *Diary of a Dean* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1949), p. 117.

In these words he describes what he means:

There is such a thing as perfection; for it is again and again mentioned in Scripture. It is not so early as justification; for justified persons are to "go on unto perfection" (Heb. 6:1). It is not so late as death; for St. Paul speaks of living men that were perfect (Phil. 13:15). It is not absolute. Absolute perfection belongs not to man, nor to angels, but to God alone. It does not make a man infallible; none is infallible while he remains in the body. Is it sinless? It is not worth while to contend for a term. It is "salvation from sin." It is "perfect love" (I John 4:18).

In such an admission, John Wesley is saying that to become "perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" is the same as being "merciful, even as your Father is merciful."

A high moment comes as ministers take their final ordination in the Methodist Church (which John Wesley founded). As they are asked the question, "Are you going on to perfection?" the answer is given, "I am earnestly striving after it." To earnestly strive to "be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" is at the heart of Christian growth. It is the Christian hope, not just for ordained ministers, but also for Christian laymen.

20. Gratitude, the Memory of the Heart (MATT. 6:1-4)

When you give alms, sound no trumpet before you.

GOD in his unpretentious way has given us so many riches from the "good earth." In 1952 we obtained from our resources in the United States: 25,754,000 tons of coke; 16,485,000 tons of anthracite coal; 210,560,000 tons of bituminous coal; 926,586,000 42-gallon barrels of petroleum; 14,959,000,000 board feet of lumber; 929,000 tons of copper; 72,448,543 tons of pig iron; 105,199,848 tons of steel; 3,135,689,000 bushels of corn; 1,298,389,000 bushels of wheat; and 1,266,025,000

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bushels of oats. Contemplating these figures, one is reminded of Father Divine's words to a visitor, "De Lawd is never stingy!" Hence the true motive for a person's giving alms to others is stimulated by a person's memory as to how gracious God is to all of us. Such a motive is beautifully framed in the words of Jean Baptiste Massieu in his *Letter* to the Abbe Sicard: "Gratitude is the memory of the heart."

The rabbis of Jesus' time agreed that alms should be given without a person's "blowing his horn" to attract attention to his generosity. "He who gives alms in secret is greater than Moses," said one of the great rabbis. Yet there were people in Jesus' time, as in our day, who liked to parade their gifts. During times of drought trumpets often were sounded in public to call people to fasting and prayers; and at such services people were asked to give money to the poor. Such public giving, which made obvious the contributions of the giver, reminded Jesus that some people were always desirous of receiving attention when they gave to the poor. They were more concerned for their receiving a reputation as being philanthropic than they were for graciously and quietly helping those in need.

If "gratitude is the memory of the heart," the Christian gives generously and quietly to those in need, because he can never forget how graciously God has given to him, and to all His children—far more than any deserves! "Gratitude," said Samuel Johnson, "is a fruit of great cultivation; you do not find it among gross people." As I sat alone one morning after breakfast in my living room for my devotions, I thought of Maltbie Babcock's words:

Back of the loaf is the snowy flour,
And back of the flour the mill,
And back of the mill is the wheat and the shower,
And the sun and the Father's will.¹

¹ "Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread," *Thoughts for Everyday Living*. Copyright 1901 by Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929 by Katharine T. Babcock. Used by permission of the publishers.

GRATITUDE, THE MEMORY OF THE HEART

Then my mind turned with gratitude to laborers in the orange groves, the workers in the dairy from which the cream had come, the laborers in the Brazil coffee plantations, and the other persons who had made my morning repast possible; and from there my thanks emerged to God himself, who in the mystery of his mercy had made all these products possible. It made me realize that all must try to give back to those in need as God has given to us, not to obtain a reputation for generosity, but to express thanks to God for his graciousness toward us.

Jesus refers to almsgivers who sound their trumpets in public as hypocrites, or "play actors." Today we speak of the "pharisaic" spirit as one of such hypocrisy. Yet not all Pharisees of Jesus' time were "play actors"; some were the leading religious leaders of his era. The *Talmud* enumerates seven types of Pharisees, five of which were looked upon with disfavor for their pride in keeping the Commandments and in giving their gifts in public; these were associated with hypocrisy. One ancient writer comments, "Fear not the Pharisees nor them that are not Pharisees, but fear rather the hypocrites which are like unto the Pharisees, whose deeds are as the deeds of Zimri and who seek the reward like Phineas." Yet there were other Pharisees who served God primarily out of love, and who were the basis of a deep religious culture in Jesus' time.

As we Christians today give to others, we find ourselves in the same situation as the various Pharisees of Jesus' era: We can give out of duty, because we want to be known as persons who give liberally to humanitarian causes; or we can give generously out of love for God and with deep gratitude for all he has done for us. If we as Christians are filled with agape (unselfish, redemptive love of God), then we must generously give to others without desire for publicity. Proud men wish a reputation for their generosity; Christian men in their humility wish merely the reward of character, whose by-products are power, peace, joy, serenity, unity of spirit. As we give quietly and without ostentation, the words of George Herbert can phrase our prayer:

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Thou that hast given so much to me,
Give one thing more—a grateful heart;
Not thankful when it pleaseth me,
As if Thy blessings had spare days;
But such a heart, whose pulse may be
Thy praise.

Twelve years ago Jimmie Johns, now a thirteen-year-old boy who lives in Lansing, Michigan, was saved from a fire by Fire Captain Hugh Fisher. Fisher answered a distress call from Jimmie's mother. He found Jimmie, then five months old, unconscious and near death from suffocation. He worked over Jimmie with the inhalator for more than half an hour, and brought him to normal breathing. Jimmie had heard the story all his life, and, more than a year ago, he decided to do something to show his appreciation. So he saved his allowance money and every penny he could get his hands on and bought a clock radio, which he gave to Retired Chief Hugh Fisher on Christmas Eve. Jimmie in this tender act showed that "gratitude is the memory of the heart." So ought all of us to remember that God has done so much for us, as we give quietly and sincerely to others in need.

21. *Worship Means a Release of Energy*

(MATT. 6:5-8)

When you pray, . . . pray to your *Father* who is in secret; and your *Father* who sees in secret will reward you.

THESE words form a preface to the most uttered prayer in Christendom, the Lord's Prayer. In the Gospel of Matthew the Lord's Prayer has seven petitions, which accord to the prayer pattern of Ps. 119:164, "Seven times a day

I praise thee." The Gospel of Luke has a shorter text for the Lord's Prayer, in which two of these petitions are omitted: "Thy will be done . . ." and "Deliver us from evil." As secret prayer is rewarded openly by God, the Mishnah also teaches that he who studies the Torah in secret will be rewarded openly, and that he who profanes God secretly will be punished publicly (Aboth 4:4).

A study of the Christian saints of the centuries reveals one fact: Prayer is the guiding force of these great devotional figures. They prayed not to change the laws of the universe to meet their personal whims, but rather to have the Spirit of God change them into Christlike men and women. They saw a mystery in prayer as a means by which their little lives might be empowered for more dynamic and unselfish living. One great personality expresses the secret power of prayer: "Worship means a release of energy." Another, Alexis Carrel, says, "The influence of prayer on the human mind and body is as demonstrable as that of secreting glands. Its results can be measured in terms of increased physical buoyancy, a greater intellectual vigor, moral stamina, and a deeper understanding of the realities underlying human relationships."¹

Luke prefaces the Lord's Prayer with Jesus' disciples' saying to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples" (11:1). The Gospels portray prayer as the secret at the core of Jesus' life: he prays early in the morning (Mark 1:35); he goes into the mountain late in the evening to pray (Mark 6:46); he prays before his arrest (Mark 14:32); he prays at his baptism (Luke 3:21); he withdraws into the desert to pray after he heals a leper (Luke 5:16); he prays before he chooses his twelve disciples (Luke 6:12); he prays before he asks his disciples their opinion of him (Luke 9:18); at the time of his transfiguration he is in prayer (Luke 9:28). Yet Jesus sets no definite rules as to how a person should pray. "For Jesus prayer was not a traditional religious exercise to be engaged in and observed at

¹ "Prayer Is Power," *Reader's Digest*, March, 1941.

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certain set hours, but the spontaneous impromptu practice of an intense personal piety.”²

The life of every Christian saint has its “secret place” where he communes with God; and God rewards his life openly by helping him become a person of poise, power, tranquillity, integrity. Emily Herman speaks of this secret place as “the secret garden of the soul”:

Every soul that is truly alive has a garden of which no other holds the key; and in hours of weariness, when it is breathless with the hot race of life, and harassed by a babel of voices, it slips through the gate and walks at peace among the flowers. In the garden of communion the clamour of the world and the contendings of the Church are alike unheard. No sound of controversy penetrates that enclosed sanctuary; no rivalries can live within its gates of peace. . . . Small wonder that the disciples loved the garden and that the disciples of all ages have been loth to exchange its sweet intimacies for the rough and irritating traffic of the open road! It belonged at once to the strength and to the weakness of mediaeval sainthood that it lingered so persistently in the garden. . . . Our Lord went often into the garden with His disciples, but the greater part of His ministry was spent, not in the garden, but on the highway and in the market-place. . . . To give the garden its true place, then, is our task, for without the garden we cannot live, and by the garden, rightly used, our work in the world is determined.³

Men are ever probing the pattern by which they can find worship as a means of releasing energy. One of the most practical ways is suggested in Stanley Jones's “ladder of prayer”: (1) decide what you really want from prayer; (2) decide that your desire is a Christian thing; (3) write down your want; (4) still your mind as you begin to pray; (5) talk with God about it;

² Walter E. Bundy, *The Religion of Jesus* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1928), p. 191.

³ *The Secret Garden of the Soul* (London: James Clarke & Co., 1924), from pp. 27-33. Used by permission of the publishers.

THE MAGIC KEY IS PRAYER

(6) promise God what you will do to make the prayer come true; (7) do everything loving about it that comes to your mind; (8) thank God for answering it in his own way; (9) after you have prayed, let your problem drop into your subconscious depth with the help of God. Thus "prayer is opening the channels from our emptiness to God's fulness, from our defeat to his victory." ⁴

Christian history is full of persons who have prayed to their Father in secret, and who have been outwardly rewarded. John Frederic Oberlin is a dramatic illustration. He was a parish minister who for fifty years prayed secretly each day for the people of his parish; his prayer time became a sacred hour in the community of Waldbach in Alsace. Its open results were observed as a spiritually barren community became an illustration of what practical religion can do. Good roads; kindergartens; friendships among Jews, Protestants, and Roman Catholics; practical industries to improve the economic plight of the people—all were ways God openly rewarded the secret prayers of Pastor Oberlin, when after fifty years as Waldbach's pastor he died in 1826.

22. *The Magic Key Is Prayer*

(MATT. 6:9)

*Our Father who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.*

PETER Wust had for many years been a much-loved professor of philosophy at Cologne University. As he lay dying after a long illness, in 1940, his students sent word to him that they would like a parting word from the deepest experience of his life. The following message was given to them:

⁴ "How to Pray" (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1943).

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The magic key is not reflection, as you might expect from a philosopher, but it is prayer. Prayer as the most complete act of devotion makes us quiet, makes us objective. A man grows in true humanity in prayer. Prayer is the final humility of the spirit. The greatest things in existence will only be given to those who pray. In suffering one learns to pray best of all.

Jesus' disciples saw that prayer was the deepest experience of Jesus' life. Luke informs us that Jesus' disciples came to him and said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples" (11:1). This prayer known as the Lord's Prayer has been called the "Model Prayer."

The Lord's Prayer in Luke is shorter than in Matthew, having but five statements: "Father, hallowed by thy name. Thy kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread; and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive every one who is indebted to us; and lead us not into temptation" (11:2-4). Martin Dibelius suggests that the shorter version in Luke was used in the baptismal service, while the longer version in Matthew, with its sevenfold form, was used liturgically in church services. The contents of the Lord's Prayer are found in Judaism's Eighteen Benedictions, which were repeated three times each day. A second-century Christian writing, the *Didache* (the Teaching of the Twelve), mentions that the Christians also repeated the Lord's Prayer three times daily.

There are three types of prayer: *low prayer*, in which a person prays for his personal, selfish needs; *middle prayer*, commonly called "intercessory prayer," in which a person intercedes for others; and *high prayer*, in which a person offers his adoration to God. The Lord's Prayer contains all three types of prayer, but it begins where all great prayers should commence, with *high prayer*:

Our Father who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.

God had been addressed as "Father" before Jesus used the term—seven times in the Old Testament; Jesus uses the term 153 times in the Gospels. It was Jesus' chief term of intimacy as he addressed God. But if Jesus felt God's closeness (or immanence) as he called God "Father," he also felt God as one before whom each worshiper knelt with awe (God is transcendent). Jewish piety never mentioned God without some expression of reverence. Along with "Father" we should say "Hallowed [holy] be thy name." How the two go together is stated by Evelyn Underhill:

What, then, is prayer? In a most general sense, it is the intercourse of our little human souls with God. Therefore it includes all the work done by God Himself through, in, and with the souls which are self-given to Him in prayer. God is Spirit; we His children, are little spiritual creatures. He is not far from each one of us. His life indwells each person in this room; and the communion of our separate lives with that frontal love and life is prayer. Prayer, then, is a purely spiritual activity; and its real doer is God Himself, the one inciter and mover of our souls. . . . All real prayer can be brought under the three heads of adoration of God, communion with God, cooperation with God; and of these adoration, worship, the lifting up of heart and mind to the Eternal, should always be taught first.¹

One of my great teachers was Rudolf Otto, who taught at Marburg University from 1917 until his retirement in 1929. His classic book is *The Idea of the Holy* (*Das Heilige*), in which he describes God's "holiness" as his perfect goodness; but it means also that God is so great and infinite—"the Lord of heaven and earth"—that our minds can never understand how infinite and wonderful God is. We can only "feel" it as we (as little creatures living for a few decades on this little planet) sense our companionship with One who is Lord of the universe. Man's reasoning can never fathom how great and holy God is;

¹ *Collected Papers* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1946), pp. 60, 61, 176. Used by permission of the publishers.

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this greatness and holiness can be understood only by a person of humility who in his prayer and contemplation meditates on God's infinite energy, love, and wisdom. With such an insight Jesus seemed to agree, as he asked his disciples to begin their praying, "Hallowed be thy name!"

As we begin the Lord's Prayer with "Hallowed be thy name," the words of Christopher Wordsworth help us understand what God's holiness means:

O Lord of heaven, and earth, and sea!
To Thee all praise and glory be;
How shall we show our love to Thee,
Who gives all!

The golden sunshine, vernal air,
Sweet flowers and fruit Thy love declare;
When harvests ripen, Thou art there,
Who givest all.

For souls redeemed, for sins forgiven,
For means of grace and hopes of heaven,
What can to Thee, O Lord! be given,
Who givest all?

We lose what on ourselves we spend,
We have, as treasures without end,
Whatever, Lord, to Thee we lend,
Who givest all!

Whatever, Lord, we lend to Thee,
Repaid a thousandfold will be;
Then gladly will we give to Thee,
Who givest all!

23. *Hope Keeps the Heart Whole*

(MATT. 6:10)

Thy kingdom come.

IN my college days the Student Volunteer Movement had for its slogan, "The Kingdom of God in our generation." Every pious Jew in Jesus' time prayed a similar petition, "May his Kingdom be established in your lifetime." A rabbinical statement of Jesus' time said, "A prayer in which the Kingdom is never mentioned is no true prayer." Jesus, following the religious custom of his day, places the first petition after God's adoration, "Thy kingdom come." Such praying is similar to the great Jewish prayers of Jesus' time. "What is actually new [in the Lord's Prayer] is not in any case the wording but the background, the nearness of the Kingdom. . . . Jesus did not give to his hearers formulas for worship, but rather an example of the new attitude of man. It was not his task to improve worship in itself. He wanted to proclaim what and how children of the coming Kingdom should pray."¹

The hope for the coming of God's kingdom in the world remained steadfast among the Jews. The prophets believed that the Kingdom would come for the last generation when God's anointed king would lead the Israelites into their ideal age. After the exile in Babylonia, which ended in 538 B.C., Israel's religious teachers began to be less hopeful about God's kingdom coming in such a fashion. Some of these thinkers (called apocalyptists) believed that God would intervene into the world with his savior on a final judgment day, and all the dead would be resurrected; to those who had been faithful to God's will his kingdom would be given. In both types of thought the hope for the Kingdom lay in the future. Whereas the hope for the Kingdom in Jesus' predecessors lay in the future, with Jesus the realization of the Kingdom (that is, the reign of God in the world) became a present reality.

¹ Martin Dibelius, *op. cit.*, pp. 72, 73.

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Jesus' followers believed that God's kingdom had begun in him. As we today continue to pray, "Thy kingdom come," we are asking God that his kingdom, begun with Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, may continue in each Christian prayer until God's kingdom reigns over the entire earth. It is the Christian's hope; and whenever he does not put this prayer into action by trying to live the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount, he feels himself under God's judgment. For every Christian the Kingdom is here to the degree that he lives Christian love; yet it is not here completely; its consummation is always a future hope.

Today we need to retain hope that God's kingdom will come into the world; Christians should never be pessimistic, for to be pessimistic is to doubt God's power. Father Francis in A. J. Cronin's *The Keys of the Kingdom*, as he ministers to his people in the midst of an epidemic, says, "Hell is that state where one has ceased to hope." In Stuttgart, Germany, as parishioners started to rebuild a church devastated by war, one of the first parts of the church to be rebuilt was the doorway, with these words over it: "Christ is Victor." It was Juvenal, a Roman poet, writing in his *Satires* a century after Jesus, who said, "Hope keeps the heart whole."

Oscar Wilde has shown the feeling which accompanies lack of hope:

We did not dare to breathe a prayer
Or to give our anguish scope!
Something was dead in each of us,
And what was dead was Hope.²

But the Christian's hope for today and tomorrow is vastly different as he prays, "Thy kingdom come." He sees the difference between historical hope and hysterical hope. The latter is based upon insecurity of self, while the former is based upon faith in God as the Christian prays, "Thy kingdom come." The

² From "The Ballad of Reading Gaol."

LOYALTY—THE HOLIEST GOOD IN THE HUMAN HEART

Christian believes that hope is the way by which love is translated into action, and faith into belief and trust.

Osa Johnson, the world's most famous woman explorer, said, "I must lose myself in action, lest I wither in despair." The Christian feels the same way: as he prays, "Thy kingdom come," he avoids despair by trying with God's help to put the prayer into action. As in Dante's *Inferno* the words over the gate into Hell are, "Abandon hope, all ye who enter here," the opposite is said by Christians who pray, "Thy kingdom come." In Paul's words, the Christian should say, "We are saved by hope" (K.J.V.); for they believe that God is not to be defeated. He is gradually giving his kingdom to those who in trust pray to him, and then put their prayers into action.

What does it really mean when the individual prays, "Thy kingdom come"? Phillipe Vernier describes the experience:

The Kingdom of God means replacing your will by His, leaving the ground where you are master for the element where he rules. As one throws himself into the water so also the Kingdom is entered by a leap into the void. It means repentance with faith; then one reaches it immediately, recognizing that it was indeed close by.³

24. *Loyalty—The Holiest Good in the Human Heart*

(MATT. 6:10)

Thy will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.

GILBERT K. Chesterton has said that when a person first reads the Sermon on the Mount, its precepts seem to turn one's world upside down; but as one ponders its teach-

³ *With the Master* (New York: Fellowship Publications, 1943), p. 43. Translated from the French by Edith Lovejoy Pierce.

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ings and sees their practical value, they turn one's world right side up. Man, however, asks, "How is God's will to be done on earth? What part can man play in performing His will?" There are some who feel that if God's will is to be done on earth, it will be *entirely* a gift of God, since man is too depraved to play any role in its accomplishment. A modern quatrain expresses this view:

Sit down, O men of God,
His Kingdom He will bring
Whenever it may please His will;
You cannot do a thing! ¹

If God's will is to be done on earth, it is because men are willing to submit their wills to God, instead of living by their own pride and human ideals. Three levels of life await man: the level of *instinct*, where man wants his own way, and will get it as far as he can; the level of *conscience*, where man has a code for living, a set of decent ideals that he feels people should live up to; the level of *grace*, where as man turns his will to God, God's grace can help lift man's will and aspirations to the concern of God. In this last stage man abandons self-effort for God's grace to supplement his human aspirations.

On the level of instinct we live by desire; on the level of conscience we live with a sense of duty; but on the level of grace, as we turn our lives to God to be used as instruments of his will, duty and desire are absorbed into God's will being done through us on earth. "The Stoic or the modern theologian, who wholly misunderstands the Sermon on the Mount, believing it a collection of ethical precepts, an ethical programme which Jesus as the supreme teacher of morality laid down for all times, is merely concerned about *what* is to be done," writes Emil Brunner. "He does not ask, *Who* can do it?" ² Jesus

¹ Parody quoted by J. K. Mozley, *Journal of Theological Studies*, XL (1939), 337.

² *The Theology of Crisis* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), p. 72.

LOYALTY—THE HOLIEST GOOD IN THE HUMAN HEART

stresses God as the one who will accomplish his will through those faithful to him.

"Loyalty is the holiest good of the human heart," wrote Seneca. When this loyalty of individuals is channeled into use for God's kingdom through the Church, God's will has one of its cardinal opportunities to be actualized on earth. Recent figures show that 59 per cent of the American people are church members. In 1952 church membership reached its highest figures of 92,277,129, a gain of 4.1 per cent over 1951, or an addition of 3,604,124 members. Church members in that year increased 2.5 times faster than the population. The figures further showed that in America we have 285,277 churches and 183,899 clergymen serving these churches. Of these church members, 34.7 per cent, or 54,229,963, are Protestants; 19.3 per cent, or 30,253,427, are Roman Catholics; there are 5,000,000 members of Jewish congregations; and 2,353,783 Eastern Orthodox members. All pray to the same God!

"What might happen," says the thoughtful person, "if all these men and women would turn their highest loyalty to God, and pray, 'Thy will be done on earth!'" Such was Jesus' invitation to his Jewish friends in his day; such is the petition offered by Christians for more than nineteen hundred years! As we pray, "Thy will be done on earth," we should remember the words of Lord Eustace Perry: "A regenerated society can only be composed of regenerated men. To expect a change in human nature may be an act of faith; but to expect a change in human nature without it is an act of lunacy." T. W. Manson further elaborates this petition: "Thy will be done, and *done by me.*" Let us not forget that cells in combinations form tissues; tissues in combinations form organs; organs in formations form selves; and selves in formations form society.

The prophets of the Old Testament looked forward to a future age when God's will would be done on earth. The Pharisees believed that if the law could be kept on two consecutive Sabbaths by God's people, he would give his kingdom,

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since his will had been fully performed in history. Jesus, however, shifts attention from keeping of the ceremonial law to performing the inner spirit of God. Redemptive love (agape) exemplifies the way God performs his will through his followers. What had been a future hope in the Law and the Prophets became a present realization in Jesus; his followers believed that Jesus was the "sign" of one who had fully performed God's will on earth, and that he had left his followers the design by which they too could do his will "on earth as it is in heaven." Edgar J. Goodspeed clearly expresses the meaning of this:

What Jesus had discerned was that the reign of God was not something to be postponed to some distant future, but a present reality to be entered into and personally realized; that God's great wealth of love and consideration was simply waiting to be accepted and adopted in men's hearts. He brought the reign of God, the kingdom of heaven, out of future fatalism into the present tense, and proposed that men should do something about it—one reason his religion not long afterward so strongly gripped the western world. He also declared its program to be self-help and mutual help, each life to be a present, immediate channel for the love and compassion and mercy of God. All we now see of cooperation in the world we owe to him. It is not accident that the least cooperative countries in the world today are atheistic.³

Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* expresses the regret men often feel, when they have failed to perform the will of God on earth. Cardinal Wolsey says:

Had I but served my God with half the zeal
I served my king, he would not in mine age
Have left me naked to mine enemies.⁴

³ *A Life of Jesus* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1950), p. 84. Used by permission of the publishers.

⁴ *Henry the Eighth*, Act III, scene 2.

25. *Generosity Is the Flower of Justice*

(MATT. 6:11)

Give us this day our daily bread.

NATHANIEL Hawthorne writes in one of his *American Note-Books* on December 19, 1850, "Generosity is the flower of justice." Man ought to give generously to others, because God has given generously to him. To pray for one's physical needs may be a petition on the low level of prayer, but it is basic in the devotional life. Man may not live by bread alone, but he does live by bread if he is to exist physically. To pray each day for "our daily bread" can be paraphrased: "O God, give me the wisdom and energy this day to have the ability to earn an honest living for the purpose of satisfying the physical needs of myself and of those who are under my care." To ask God for help to earn one's daily bread is to place oneself upon the dependence of God.

The deeply thoughtful person as he partakes of his daily bread offers meditation:

Be gentle
When you touch bread.
Let it not lie
Uncared for—unwanted.
So often bread
Is taken for granted.

There is so much beauty
In bread—
Beauty of sun and soil,
Beauty of patient toil,
Winds and rain have caressed it,
Christ often blessed it.

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Be gentle

When you touch bread.¹

Hence, as he petitions, "Give us this day our daily bread," he thanks God for all whose labors have helped to create his daily bread; but most of all he offers gratitude to God for making the soil, the sun, the earth, the growth in the seed, possible. In discerning thus that God's generosity is the flower of his justice (or his mercy), he asks that he may show gratitude to God by being as generous toward others.

In his will Nathan Strauss, generous Jewish philanthropist, left these words: "I have always been deeply impressed by an old Jewish proverb which says, 'What you give for the cause of charity in health is gold; what you give in sickness is silver; what you give after death is lead.'" God's giving each day to satisfy man's physical needs (as well as his spiritual needs) is "gold"; and man ought therefore in his generosity to give similar gifts to those whom in their need he can help.

Some versions of this petition read, "Give us this day our bread for tomorrow," instead of "Give us this day our daily bread." The Mosaic code ordered a man's wages paid every evening: "You shall give him his hire on the day he earns it" (Deut. 24:15). Some scholars infer that there may have been two forms of this prayer, one with the words "our daily bread" as a morning prayer, the other with the phrase "our bread for tomorrow" as an evening prayer for the needs of the following day. Luke's Gospel uses the phrase "Give us each day our daily bread." However, in all versions the main import is that man in his earning of a living feels himself largely dependent upon God. He sees life in all its dimensions as a co-operation with God.

Francis of Assisi, whose own life was a living parable of absolute trust in God for his daily bread, has given us a prayer of one who would have his generosity become the flower of justice:

¹ "Bread." Author unknown.

GENEROSITY IS THE FLOWER OF JUSTICE

Lord, make me an instrument of peace!
Where there is hatred . . . *let me sow love.*
Where there is injury . . . *pardon.*
Where there is doubt . . . *faith.*
Where there is despair . . . *hope.*
Where there is darkness . . . *light.*
Where there is sadness . . . *joy.*

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled . . . *as to console.*
To be understood . . . *as to understand.*
To be loved . . . *as to love.*

—for—

It is in giving . . . *that we receive.*
It is in pardoning . . . *that we are pardoned.*
It is in dying *that we are born to eternal life.*

The danger in asking God for our daily bread is that we may use God as a means to an end, rather than as the end in himself. James A. Pike views this danger:

In their genuine eagerness to help people, preachers and counselors often hold forth God as a means to an end, rather than as the end itself. In short, God becomes a tool for man's advantage. Religion becomes a "resource" for personal fulfillment. Religion becomes a way to sleep better, or "to make friends and influence people." This, of course, is to make man God, and is ultimately irreligious. It turns prayer into "my will be done, with Thy help." God is not something to be used. He is One to be adored and served. He is the end, not we. When a man has a right relationship with God, then he is saved; that is, he is whole.²

To the one who prays for his daily bread, God is not merely one to be used for the satisfaction of his physical needs. He is one to be shared in the spiritual adventure of Christian living. One's ideal prayer should be:

² *Beyond Anxiety* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), pp. 6-7. Used by permission of the publishers.

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Bread of the world in mercy broken,
Wine of the soul in mercy shed,
By whom the words of life were spoken,
And in whose death our sins are dead;

Look on the hearts by sorrow broken,
Look on the tears by sinners shed;
And be Thy feast to us the token
That by Thy Grace our souls are fed.³

26. *Only the Brave Know How to Forgive*

(MATT. 6:12, 15)

And forgive us our debts,
As we also have forgiven our debtors.

THE writer of the Letter to the Ephesians has caught the spirit of forgiveness as expressed in the Lord's Prayer: "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you" (4:31-32). Seneca, Roman writer of Jesus' time, says like words: "Forgive that you may be forgiven." Epictetus, a fellow Stoic who succeeded Seneca, sounds a basic insight into the nature of those who are big enough to forgive, "Forgiveness is better than revenge; for forgiveness is the sign of a gentle nature, but revenge the sign of a savage nature." In the eighteenth century Laurence Sterne, preacher and novelist, wrote a similar note in one of his sermons: "Only the brave know how to forgive. A coward never forgave; it is not in his nature." Men of every age see that forgiveness is a sign of heroic and brave living.

The purpose of religion is to bring man atonement (at-one-

³ Reginald Heber, "Bread of the World."

ment) with God and other men. Modern language speaks of this as "integration," whereby man feels himself adjusted to God and his fellow men. Man can never possess two spirits at the same time: he cannot feel revenge toward his fellow men, while at the same moment he senses God's loving forgiveness in his breast. Man is an instrument through whom God's Spirit can communicate itself to other people. If man thus possesses hatred or animosity instead of forgiveness toward others, such an attitude forms a block so that God's forgiveness cannot enter into man's spirit. Any individual who expects forgiveness from God while he hates his fellow men is not only a hypocrite; he is also attempting to be an impossible person—it cannot be done!

Jewish rabbis looked upon "sins" and "debts" as meaning the same wrong. Hence Luke is saying in content what Matthew expresses: "Forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive every one who is indebted to us" (Luke 11:4). A sin or a debt is something done to or owed to God, and a reconciliation must be made if man is not to remain estranged from God. However there is a by-product of this estrangement from God which brings about man's sense of inner frustration. He who hates or bears resentments finds himself in inner discord. "The chief personality characteristic of persons with hypertension or high blood pressure is resentment," a medical doctor recently said. "When resentment is chronic, chronic hypertension and heart trouble follow." It is not only good religion, but also good medicine, to forgive. Furthermore forgiveness of others opens up the human floodgates so that God's energetic love can enter man's spirit and give him a new surge for great living.

During the War Between the States, Abraham Lincoln illustrated that "only the brave know how to forgive." When most of his friends were denouncing their enemies, he said: "You have more of a feeling of personal resentment than I have. Perhaps I have too little of it; but I never thought it paid. A man doesn't have the time to spend half his life in quarrels. If any man ceases to attack me, I never remember the past against him." Not to forgive is a negative way of living, for it

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takes the first-rate energy of man away from the positive creative experiences of high living. If man wants a happier life, a more creative life, and a life which invites companionship with God, then he must learn the art of forgiving his debtors for what they have done to him.

"Trespases," used in some church liturgies instead of "debts," was first so translated in Tyndale's Bible in 1525; this was copied by some of the English primers, and from these primers got into the *Book of Common Prayer* in 1662. Various churches have borrowed their version of the Lord's Prayer directly or indirectly from the *Book of Common Prayer*, and thus use, "Forgive us our trespases, As we forgive those who trespass against us."

Recently an article entitled "Your Next Twelve Hours" laid down principles for positive, abundant living:

Just for today I will try to live this day only, and not tackle my whole life problem at once. . . . Just for today I will be happy. . . . Just for today I will strengthen my mind. I will study. I will learn something useful. . . . Just for today I will adjust myself to what is, and not try to adjust everything to my own desires. . . . Just for today I will exercise my soul in three ways: I will do somebody a good turn, and not get found out. I will do at least two things I don't want to do—just for exercise. I will not show anyone that my feelings are hurt; they may be hurt, but today I will not show it. Just for today I will be agreeable. I will look as well as I can, dress becomingly, talk low, act courteously, criticize not one bit, not find fault with anybody and not try to improve or regulate anybody except myself. Just for today I will have a program. . . . Just for today I will have a quiet half hour all by myself, and relax. . . . Just for today I will be unafraid. Especially I will not be afraid to enjoy what is beautiful, and to believe that as I give to the world, so the world will give to me.¹

As I read these par-excellence suggestions for high living, I

¹ Kenneth Holmes, in *This Week* magazine. Copyright 1953 by the United Newspapers Magazine Corporation. Used by permission of *This Week*, *Reader's Digest*, and the author.

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added a central tenet: *Just for today* I will be too big and too great to bear resentment or hatred toward any person; instead I will practice forgiveness and kindness toward all people I meet, regardless of how they may treat me!

27. *Lead Us, O Father*

(MATT. 6:13)

*And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.*

C. C. TORREY believes that the Gospels were originally written in the Aramaic, Jesus' native language. He explains that, if we were to translate the Greek phrase into the Aramaic, and then the Aramaic into the English words, this perplexing petition would read, "And let us not yield to temptation, but deliver us from evil." Such a meaning seems to fit into the concept that man has of God, for certainly God would rather help man to meet his temptations and trials than to "lead" him into them. That God would lead man into temptation seems incongruous with Jesus' concept of God as Father. The Epistle of James seems near to the attitude of Jesus about God, as related to the problem of man's temptation: "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted with evil and he himself tempts no one; but each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire" (1:13-14). Dwight L. Moody is like most of us: One night he was heard praying in his summer hotel room that God might save him from Moody. Most temptations begin when man is centered on himself.

Life's temptations and trials, according to Jesus, are not to be avoided by learning a number of rules about right and wrong. Nor will the Greek axiom "Knowledge is virtue" keep a man from doing evil. Many of us, who know what is right or wrong, commit wrong because our wills are not harnessed to a

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higher Power in the world; for sometimes it is only God who can help us refrain from temptation. We need to believe in God as a power in our lives who aids us to meet and overcome temptations. Rabbi Simlai's attitude toward God as a power for righteousness in man's life is close to that of Jesus:

Six hundred and thirteen commandments were given to Moses. . . . Then David came and reduced them to eleven. Then came Isaiah, and reduced them to six. Then came Micah, and reduced them to three. Then Isaiah came again, and reduced them to two, as it is said, "Keep ye judgment and do righteousness." Then came Amos, and reduced them to one, as it is said, "Seek ye me and live."

Religious psychologists indicate four temptations from which we need to be saved: selfishness, subjective fears, resentments, guilt. If with God's help we can live above these inner frustrations, then we can have a verve and an adventurous spirit for great living. Dr. O. Spurgeon English, a medical doctor and psychiatrist, elaborates man's harmful emotions as hate, guilt, resentments, anger, hostility, grudges—yet all these are definitely related to selfishness and pride. Man's first step, lest he yield to temptation, is to shift from concentration on himself to becoming absorbed in a great life purpose, in the aid of other people, or (like the great seers and prophets and saints) to center his life in God.

Man needs a big purpose for living, for in his living for little things he is led into destructive, selfish interests. The French essayist Montaigne once said: "A man who has not directed his life as a whole toward a definite goal cannot possibly set his particular actions in order. The archer must first know what he is aiming at, and then set his hand, his bow, his strings, his arrow, and his movements for that goal. Our plans go astray because they have no direction and no aim. No wind serves the man who has no port or destination." A worthy purpose in life keeps a person's mind on big things; and thus his mind cannot

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be absorbed in himself and the negative selfish temptations that accompany self-centeredness. As a young teacher recently said, "Life is too big and too great to become absorbed in the little things of life." A young woman, unhappy that she had succumbed to temptation, said after her penitence, "From here on with God's help I am going to have my life become a temple and not a tavern!"

In 1949 the Bicentennial of Goethe was held in the small, picturesque town of Aspen, Colorado. Great people of all professions and vocations from the world were there. Yet one man in attendance seemed to submerge the great Goethe; his name was Albert Schweitzer. This medical missionary of Lambarene with his doctor's degrees in medicine, music, philosophy, and theology was called Jesus' thirteenth disciple. "Why was he so great at Aspen?" asks Arnold H. Lowe:

Because he stands for the only things that really have value in life: a dedication, a surrender of self, a forgetting of one's personal well-being, a trying to lift the lowest to the highest level possible, healing somebody's wounds, pushing someone's horizon farther out. And so the missionary who lost himself in the jungle becomes the greatest thing in our modern day.¹

Those who desire not to yield to temptation—which begins with self-interest—can well emulate Albert Schweitzer. Jesus called it living for the kingdom of God.

¹ *Start Where You Are* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1950), p. 20.

28 *Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow*

(MATT. 6:13)

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

WHEN I repeat the Lord's Prayer with Roman Catholics in a public service, I notice that they stop when it comes to the repeating of the doxology, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory." Jerome's Vulgate, the first official Bible for Roman Catholics, does not contain these words of praise, and they have never been added to the Lord's Prayer as repeated by Roman Catholics. William Tyndale used Erasmus' Greek text when he made his English translation of the New Testament, and since Erasmus' text had these words of praise, Tyndale's New Testament is the first English Bible to contain the words: "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory." Modern translations place these words in the footnotes, since the earliest and most authentic manuscripts do not contain the sentence of praise. They belong, however, in any modern use of the Lord's Prayer, for every great prayer should end with a note of praise!

Those who take Jesus' design for living seriously should praise the Lord not only at the close of the Lord's Prayer; they should, as Augustine suggested, be praising God all the time. As Augustine was trying to inspire his parishioners at Hippo to let God quicken them in all things, in explaining Psalm 34 he said:

If you are singing a hymn, you are praising God. Then the hymn comes to an end, and it is time for a meal; if you keep yourself from overeating, you will be praising God. Are you a rural laborer? Then be sure that there are no weeds left in the ground you are digging, and once again this will be an occasion of praising God. Thus by the innocency of your works you will be praising God all the day long.

PRAISE GOD FROM WHOM ALL BLESSINGS FLOW

The Bible is filled with the note of praising God. The word "praise" in some form appears 282 times in the Bible; in the prayer book of the Temple, the Psalms, praise to God is given 148 times. For Jewish people to pray without offering a doxology to God would seem incomplete; for the Lord's Prayer to be uttered by the early Christians without its closing doxology would also lack a high note. And although some early manuscripts did not end with the words, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory," this phrase was used in the early Christian community. The *Didache*, a short manual on church life written about A.D. 150, has this doxology closing the Lord's Prayer.

The most common doxology used in the Christian church, along with the words of praise following the Lord's Prayer, is the one written by Bishop Thomas Ken in 1695. No other words outside the Bible have been more used than these. No matter in what land a Christian may be, or in what tongue the hymns are sung, these words of Ken's doxology are commonly used. Originally Bishop Ken wrote three hymns for the young men at Winchester College—the Morning Hymn, the Evening Hymn, and the Midnight Hymn—with each hymn ending with the doxology:

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Bishop Ken gave these directions regarding the use of the hymns with the closing doxology:

As soon as you wake in the morning, good Philotheus, strive as much as you can to keep all worldly thoughts out of your mind, till you have presented the first fruits of the day to God; which will be an excellent preparation to make you spend the rest of it better; and therefore, be sure to sing the Morning and Evening

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Hymns in your chamber, devoutly remembering that the Psalmist, from happy experience, assures you that it is a very good thing to tell of the lovingkindness of God in the morning and of his truth in the night season.

The advice which Bishop Ken gave regarding his hymns and their closing doxologies can well be given regarding the saying of the Lord's Prayer thoughtfully, ending it with its words of praise. As the Lord's Prayer begins with adoration, so should it end with praise.

In an age in which pessimism seems to punctuate religion too frequently, it is well that we end our prayers with doxologies. The doxology of the Lord's Prayer was first observed in the *Didache* about A.D. 150, no easy age for Christians. They were persecuted by the Romans, confused by the Gnostic heresy; but they were not dismayed, for they said their prayers, including the Lord's Prayer, with a note of praise. And so ought we today, for we belong to the same religious tradition. George A. Buttrick writes:

The early church even in persecution cried, "For thine is the glory," and so had power. The word *amen* is a massive word fallen on evil days. It is the word Jesus used when he said, in our [the Revised Standard] version, "verily." It is man's resolve: "So let it be!" It is, more deeply, trust and assurance that God can bring great things to pass: "So let it be!" By right instinct the church added a doxology and an *amen* to the Lord's Prayer.¹

29. *A Saint Must Be Radiant*

(MATT. 6:16-18)

When you fast, do not look dismal.

RUFUS Jones, the great Quaker, once asked Baron von Hügel the characteristics of a saint. In his reply four

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 316.

qualities were given: loyalty to his faith; great courage; relationship to extraordinary spiritual powers; radiance. Of the four, Baron von Hügel felt that radiance was the one characteristic which set saints apart from ordinary religious people. The words "Do not look dismal," as spoken by Jesus, suggest the quality of radiance for those who are to share God's kingdom.

Most religions have held attitudes toward fasting. Zoroastrianism forbids it; but religions such as Judaism, Hinduism, and Islam have had their fixed fast days. Followers of Mohammed refrain from eating for one entire month when the feast of Ramadan arrives. The Jewish Law prescribed but one fast day, the Day of Atonement, in which the high priest offered sacrifices yearly for the sins of the people. By-weekly fasts were also held. These feasts, held on Mondays and Thursdays to commemorate Moses' ascending and descending Mount Sinai, were rigidly kept by pious Pharisees, with their faces unwashed, their heads covered with ashes, their feet bare, their faces in sad expression. It was said of one of these pious persons, Rabbi Joshua Ben Ananiah, "All the days of his life his face was black because of fasting."

While Jesus does not condemn fasting, he does not encourage it as a religious rite; religion for him is not a sad affair, but a joyous one. Mark 2:18-20 records an interesting story regarding Jesus' attitude toward fasting: "Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and people came and said to him, 'Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?' And Jesus said to them, 'Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. The days will come, when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day.'" Jesus' followers began to fast after his death on Wednesdays and Fridays, on Wednesdays in penitence for Judas' betrayal, on Fridays because of the Crucifixion. But as long as he as "the bridegroom" was with them, Jesus did not stress the virtue of fasting.

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We are not to intimate by the few teachings which we have from Jesus about fasting that he was not deeply concerned with spiritual discipline; he himself spent "forty days" fasting in the wilderness before he began his public ministry. Fasting, as a help to clear the spiritual perspectives of a person, has spiritual value. What Jesus is preaching against is the hypocrisy that so easily accompanies the outward customs of fasting, where pious Pharisees with their sad, dirty faces and ash-covered heads parade their piety. By their appearances they liked to have people point to them and say, "Look at those pious persons!" Jesus believes that one can fast and practice spiritual disciplines, yet outwardly appear radiant.

A radiant person is enthusiastic; he effulges joy and happiness. The word "enthusiasm" has a different meaning today as compared with the time of Thomas Hobbes. In his *Leviathan* he explains an enthusiastic person as one who is "fantastic," one imbued with wild illusions, an unbalanced person with no standards or true values. Today, however, we indicate an enthusiastic person as one whose life is rooted in God (the word "enthusiasm" is from the Greek *en theos*, meaning "in God"). The source for the radiance of sainthood lies in closeness to God. Likewise Jesus' followers should not "look dismal," for their lives are rooted in the "Father who sees in secret"; hence, they ought to be radiant.

Emerson once said that "nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm." Such a thesis was expressed by Henry Sloane Coffin in his inaugural presidential address at Union Theological Seminary in New York City in 1926. He laid down four ideals for a seminary: scholarship and solid learning; churchmanship in which there is "one church, hospitable and homelike to all disciples of Jesus Christ"; worshipfulness; an enthusiasm in which there is "the kindling in all those who study here of a passion for the world-wide Kingdom of Christ."

Alice Freeman Palmer similarly saw the necessity of enthusiasm for teachers: "There are a few things a teacher can do, and that only for the sensitive and spiritual. He can initiate en-

thusiasm, clear paths, inculcate discipline. He can communicate a passion and a method, no more." "Do not look dismal" is not only good advice for first-century worshipers; it gives sound suggestion for any time.

30. *Finding the Pearl of Great Price*

(MATT. 6:19-21)

Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

IN 1936 Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman wrote a thoughtful, humorous play, *You Can't Take It with You*. Though it was a comedy, it carried a spiritual lesson, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." A touching moment comes early in the play when Grandpa gives the grace, before the family of three generations begins the meal:

Well, Sir, we've been getting along pretty good for awhile now, and we're certainly much obliged. Remember, all we ask, is just to go along and be happy in our own sort of way. Of course we want to keep our health, but as far as anything else is concerned, we'll leave it to you. Thank you.¹

Jesus one day told the parable of the "pearl of great price" (Matt. 13:45-46): "The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it." C. H. Dodd writes about this parable, as he questions whether the parable is asking about the immense value of the pearl or about the sacrifice needed to acquire it:

First, inasmuch as the Kingdom of God was conceived by those whom Jesus addressed as the great object of hope and prayer, they

¹ New York: Farrar & Rhinehart, 1937.

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did not need to be assured of its value. Secondly, the parables, like the majority of the parables of Jesus, set forth an example of human action, and invite a judgment upon it. Was it unpardonable rashness in the merchant to realize all his assets to buy a single pearl? At first sight, yes. But to know when to plunge makes the successful financier. Only you must feel quite sure of the value of the property you are buying.²

To obtain the "pearl of great price" needs sacrifice upon the part of the person as well as his realization that the "pearl" has great value, for, says Jesus, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." In Jesus' time much of a person's treasure consisted in rugs and drapes, which if buried in the ground would rot, and if left in his home would be destroyed by moths. Thieves of Jesus' day would break into a house by using a trowel or metal instrument to bore through the clay walls and obtain the loot. Jesus is asking: Is life so intended that a person should invest his highest interests in material things like rugs and curtains? Or is it wiser judgment and better religion to put God's kingdom as the highest good into which one should thrust abilities, interests, and energies? God's kingdom is the "pearl of great price."

To lay up for oneself "treasures in heaven" does not mean that Jesus is asking his followers to have right values now merely as a way to obtain later their heavenly reward. Jesus' eyes are primarily upon the way men live in the present world; and he is implying that the "heavenly values" which outlast space and time, moth and rotting, can here and now be obtained by men and women. Nor is Jesus saying that money (or wealth) in itself is evil. Money is dangerous, for it tends to distract man from the true ends of life; though money can be used as a means to man's high purpose in living; but it never should become the "pearl of great price." "The true Christian attitude

² *Parables of the Kingdom* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), pp. 112-13. Used by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons and James Nisbet & Co., Ltd.

is not to despise money, but to evaluate it properly and use it nobly," says Archibald M. Hunter.³

There is more than money, however, which a Christian can give to his fellow men. Tolstoy tells the story of a man who stopped to give money to a beggar. As he reached into his pocket, he realized that he had left his pocketbook at home. "I am sorry, brother," he said to the beggar, "but I have nothing with me." To which the beggar replied, "Never mind, brother, that too—to call me 'brother'—was also a gift." The Christian who catches the spirit of Jesus' teachings from the mountainside sees a sacramental relationship between what he *has* and what he is as related to his true treasure, and also to what he can give to his fellow men.

As people who live in the richest country in the world, those in the United States ought to contemplate seriously that of our annual income we spend 85 per cent, save 12 per cent, and give 3 per cent. We would be a happier nation—and happier individuals—if we gave many times 3 per cent to aid education, culture, science, medicine, character building, and religion. Jesus' words, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also," cause us to ponder seriously as to what is the "highest good" for our lives. We need to reflect on the words "You can't take it with you!" Ernest Fremont Tittle was right in saying, "Christian stewardship has been thought of in terms of the giving of money. It must come to be thought of in terms of the dedication of life."

Philip Guedalla in doing research on the life of the Duke of Wellington found a bundle of receipted bills, which the Duke had carefully saved. In looking over these bills Guedalla learned about the character of his subject, for he saw what the Duke's likes had been. Philip Guedalla wrote after this experience: "Find out how a man spends his money, and you will find what kind of a man he is." Jesus' words were similar: "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 77.

31. *The Eye Is the Lamp of the Body*

(MATT. 6:22-23)

If your eye is sound, your whole body will be full of light.

IN his poem "Prayer," Louis Untermeyer says:

Open my eyes to visions girt
With beauty, and with wonder lit—
But let me always see the dirt,
And all that spawn and die in it.¹

If a person's eye is sound, he will behold the glory of God's wondrous beauty in the world; but he will also see the sorrowful plight of his fellow men. A saint has been defined in similar terms: His spiritual eye on God brings him unusual resources from God; but his deep sense of sympathy makes him feel the sorrow of mankind. The man of the "sound eye" possesses integrity; he keeps the proper balance between his love of God and his concern for man; he scorns hypocrisy.

The Christian possesses what Martin Dibelius calls the "eye of faith." The degree to which a Christian with his "eye of faith" allows the light of God into his self determines the spiritual health of his whole person. If a person is to see life steadily and to see it whole, as Matthew Arnold says, he must have a right focus on life. Jesus describes the Pharisees as "blind guides, . . . blind fools, . . . blind men," and speaks against pharisaic formalism in cutting words: "You blind Pharisee! first cleanse the inside of the cup and of the plate, that the outside also may be clean" (Matt. 23:26). In the Gospel of John, after the man born blind is healed, some of the Pharisees ask, "Are we also blind?" (John 9:40). Jesus is saying that the way to see God with the sound eye is through the

¹ From *Challenge* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1914). Used by permission of the publishers.

THE EYE IS THE LAMP OF THE BODY

"eye of faith," and not through pious formalities of the Pharisees.

Some today are suffering from "spiritual myopia," or nearsightedness; in their shortsighted view of life they can never get beyond their own selfish interests. Their myopia is caused by selfishness, prejudice, pride, in which in their disease they say: "My creed is the only correct one. . . . My church is the only true apostolic church. . . . My way of baptism is the only true mode for salvation. . . . My interpretation of the Bible is the only correct way to understand scriptures. . . . If we support the church in the community, why worry about foreign missions? Let the foreigners in other lands care for themselves."

For spiritual myopia toward foreign missions some need to be corrected, so that they can have "bifocal vision." Christians need to see problems close at home, but also to see many world problems as Christian problems. It is a generous view to speak about "world brotherhood" and "world Christianity," but the places to begin our care for world movements are in the family, the neighborhood, the place where we work, the community. As these smaller units are affected, the whole world will receive their impetus. At the same time aid must be directed toward the needs of people in the remote nations of the world.

Some have spiritual myopia because of self-centeredness, in which the individual feels himself the center of the universe. Fritz Kunkel describes the cure for this spiritual disease:

Pour out all your fears and anxieties, malicious joy and greed and hatred, and you will be astonished at the terrific amount of power which is pent up in your conscious mind. We can release this power, only by bringing it into the open, into the light of consciousness, and by accepting ourselves as we are, even though the mountain of debts seems to crush us." *

Jesus' message of faith and repentance as the ways by which the body may be full of the light of God sounds a message of

* *In Search of Maturity* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943), p. 244.

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mental health for those who will take his gospel seriously.

Reinhold Niebuhr in his book *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness* writes: "The 'Children of light' may thus be defined as those who seek to bring self-interest under the discipline of a more universal law and in harmony with a more universal good. . . . The 'children of darkness' are evil because they know no law beyond the self." ³ Canon Frederic Donaldson of Westminster Abbey recently defined the modern sins of the "children of darkness" as (1) policies without principle, (2) pleasure without conscience, (3) wealth without work, (4) knowledge without character, (5) industry without morality, (6) science without humanity, (7) worship without sacrifice. As modern man repents of these sins, and allows the cleansing light of God to purify his whole body with its light, he finds the gospel of one who was called the "light of the world" the key to his integrity.

It is our appreciation of Jesus as this "light," according to Clement of Alexandria, which distinguishes us from other creatures: "Unless we had come to know the Word, and had been enlightened by His rays, we should have been in no way different from birds who are being crammed with food, fattening in darkness and reared for death. Let us admit the light, that we may admit God. Let us admit the light, and become disciples of the Lord."

31. *Men Cannot Serve Two Masters*

(MATT. 6:24)

No one can serve two masters. . . . You cannot serve God and mammon.

OF Arturo Toscanini, the great orchestra conductor, someone has said, "As you hear him conduct a Beethoven symphony you felt that not only has he mastered Bee-

³ (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944), p. 10.

MEN CANNOT SERVE TWO MASTERS

thoven, but that Beethoven has also mastered Toscanini." This is an axiom true of man's obsessing interests: as he becomes interested in them, his whole life seems to take on their complexion. That which we serve dominates the drive and motive of our living. This is why Paul in his loyalty to Christ so frequently says, "Christ in me, and I in Christ." That which we serve sooner or later serves us.

Jesus looks keenly into human nature and its accompanying battle as it tries to serve a higher motive as over against a lower motive. He seems to realize that a "split personality" adds confusion to the art of living, when a person tries simultaneously to serve two ideals. He says, "You cannot serve both God and mammon!" "Mammon" is used by Jesus to refer to money and riches; today we clothe such a loyalty as "materialism." It is our materialistic faith in sensual things, according to Pitirim Sorokin, which has caused the downfall of modern culture. We see it not only in the world of money-making, but in art, music, and the other realms which influence culture. Only as we graduate from this sensate loyalty to material things into an *ideational* loyalty to spiritual ideals is there hope for the renewal of the world. He reviews the modern dilemma in these words:

Investing all his energies in the control of nature, sensate man achieved a conspicuous degree of success. But in this process he lost his *self-control*. Becoming—like a child toying with a bomb—infatuated with the physical forces at his disposal, in an access of madness he directed them against himself and his own achievements. In his eagerness to serve mammon he forgot to serve God, and he now pays the tragic price of his folly! ¹

Man is ever making decisions as to whether he will serve high or low ideals. To serve the high demands sacrifice and discipline. André Maurois in *From My Journal* writes on January 1, 1946: "Each year, on this day of beginning, I make my resolutions: To work, work, work. To refuse 'jobs' in order

¹ *The Crisis of Our Age* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1941), p. 240.

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to write—not great books (that is not within my province to decide)—but at least the best I am able to conceive. . . . But what is the use of setting down resolutions? One must live them!”² Admiral Peary applied discipline and sacrifice as he “lost” himself into the hope of discovering the North Pole: “For more than a score of years that point on the earth’s surface had been the object of my every effort. To attain it my whole being, physical, mental, and moral, had been dedicated.”

There is the danger that a person in serving mammon as his life motive will “use” other persons in his quest for success. People, however, are never employed as means to an end when a person puts God at the center of his living. The reverse is true: When an individual primarily serves God, his life becomes transformed by God’s Spirit, so that he is motivated to help others. Joseph Conrad in his preface to *A Personal Record* writes, “All ambitions are lawful except those which climb upward on the miseries or credulities of mankind.” In similar words Pope in his “Essay on Man” says:

The same ambition can destroy or save,
And makes a patriot as it makes a knave.

Elton Trueblood has written a book called *Your Other Vocation*, in which he is asking that as men serve the ideals of their profession, they also serve God as their “other vocation.” Jesus’ statement about man’s not serving both God and mammon is not an invitation to poverty and asceticism, nor is it a condemnation of wealth. It is merely asking that men in their businesses and professions act like Christians. It is incorrect for a Christian to say, “I’m not a minister. I’m a carpenter.” What he should say is, “I am a Christian carpenter.” At the wedding dinner of François Millet (the French artist who painted “The Angelus”) his grandmother said, “Remember,

² (New York: Harper & Bros., 1948). Translated from the French by Joan Charles.

WORRY, THE INTEREST PAID BY THOSE WHO BORROW TROUBLE

my François, that you are a Christian before you are a painter. Never sacrifice on the altar of Baal." To which he replied, "Even if they cover the canvas with gold and ask me to paint a 'St. Francis possessed by the devil,' I will never consent."

The danger which confronts a person who sees life through the eyes of materialism is described by Lew Sarett in "Requiem for a Modern Croesus":

To him the moon was a silver dollar, spun
Into the sky by some mysterious hand; the sun
Was a gleaming golden coin—
His to purloin;
The freshly minted stars were dimes of delight
Flung out upon the counter of the night.

In yonder room he lies,
With pennies on his eyes.³

To such a person Jesus' statement about loyalty to God or mammon lends a warning. It also invites thoughtful contemplation of Jesus' further words, "For what does it profit a man, to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? For what can a man give in return for his life?" (Mark 8:36-37). Thoreau caught Jesus' spirit when he said, "To have done anything by which you earned money merely is to have been truly idle."

33. *Worry, the Interest Paid by Those Who Borrow Trouble*

(MATT. 6:25-34)

Do not be anxious about your life.

MOST people seem to worry. A group of 104 psychologists through a study of their cases determined a

³ From *Slow Smoke*. Copyright 1925 by Henry Holt & Co., Inc. Copyright 1953 by Lew Sarett. Used by permission of the publishers.

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timetable for anxieties: At eighteen we worry about ideals and personal appearance; at twenty, about appearance; at twenty-three, about morals; at twenty-six, about making a good impression; at thirty, about salary and the cost of living; at thirty-one, about business success; at thirty-three, about job security; at thirty-eight, about health; at forty-one, about politics; at forty-two, about marital problems; at forty-five, about the loss of ambition; over forty-five, about health. As one looks over this chart of anxieties, one needs to hear the words of an older, mature person, "If I could live my life over again, there is one thing I would not do—I would not worry. I have suffered too much from worry, and now realize that it never got me anywhere. It is just plain foolish!" In similar words Jesus said, "Do not be anxious about your life. . . . Which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his span of life?"

When Jesus tells us not to be anxious about food and clothing, is he implying that we can live this carelessly in the world? Or are these words an oriental hyperbole in which Jesus by extravagant language is attempting to say, "Shift your spiritual attention to God and not to things! If you put God first and do his will, then the material things of life will find their proper alignment"? Some believe that these words are meant only for those who take monastic orders, where food and clothing are not to be earned. Others say that these words are among Jesus' teachings which make us feel deep despair, since we do worry; so we are driven to Jesus Christ and the Cross for our salvation. Many, however, view these absolute teachings about faith and trust as an ideal, and feel themselves under their judgment when they worry. They impel a Christian to realize that the cure for worry is a shift from distrust in self to a firm trust in God. Worry is folly; it is, according to Dean W. R. Inge, "the interest paid by those who borrow trouble."

Education and religion ought to teach people to be anxious about the right things. It is estimated that nine tenths of our worries are about events that will not occur. We worry over others' criticisms of us, about our health, about decisions we

WORRY, THE INTEREST PAID BY THOSE WHO BORROW TROUBLE have made, although in our sane moments we know that worry will not better any of these situations; worry will only make us worse individuals. A study of 176 business executives, who average forty-four years of age, shows that one third suffer from one of three ailments due to anxiety and hypertension: heart disease; digestive tract ulcers; high blood pressure. About such high-pressure living Winfred Rhoades writes: "Emotional dissipation is no less an intemperance than alcoholic dissipation. The effect upon a man's life may be equally bad though not in the same way."¹ Regarding man's race for success Fritz Kunkel speaks: "All egocentric tension can easily be traced to our striving for superiority and fear of inferiority. We survey a task, and the more we are afraid of failure, the more we overestimate the energy which is needed."² To these same people Jesus' words ring an alarm: "Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? . . . Which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his span of life? . . . Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well. . . . Do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day."

We should learn to be anxious about some problems. We ought to be anxious about the schools in our communities, the recreational programs for youth, the environments of our homes. We ought to be anxious about loyalty to the churches in our communities. We should be anxious about the proper balance of work, play, love, and worship that each of us is putting into the daily program. We ought to be anxious to work out for ourselves a Christian view of life. Not long ago I became airsick as a plane tossed up and down in a rough storm. At first I fought the roughness of the trip, and found my body tense and rigid. Then I realized that such tension was merely increasing my physical misery. So I relaxed and let myself "take" the dips of

¹ *The Great Adventure of Living* (New York: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1942), p. 95.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 143.

the plane as it went up and down. By this relaxing I was able to finish the plane trip without further illness.

Daily living is like that plane trip. If we fight with tension the daily difficulties, we shall only increase the misery of living. If we can relax, and realize that "underneath are His everlasting arms," we shall find a great aid in not being anxious about our life. We do not want to be among those to whom Jesus spoke, "O men of little faith!"

Several years ago, after *Peace of Mind* by Joshua Liebman and *Peace of Soul* by Fulton J. Sheen were written (one by a Jewish rabbi and the other by a Roman Catholic leader), Ralph W. Sockman was asked as a Protestant minister to write on a similar theme. After thinking over his title, however, Dr. Sockman concluded on *How to Believe* as the best title. And he was right, for as we have proper religious beliefs about God, we shall begin to overcome anxieties. Right belief precedes right mental health, which brings "peace of mind" or "peace of soul."

34. *Bid Your Own Conscience Look Within*

(MATT. 7:1-6)

Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged.

ARISTOPHANES in *The Frogs* sets an ideal for him who would judge another:

Happy is the man possessing
The superior holy blessing
Of a judgment and a taste
Accurate, refined, and chaste.

But many of us are not gifted with such qualities to make judgments of others. Too frequently our judgments of others are

made on an unfair basis, and are statements of censoriousness to compensate for our own weaknesses. We tear down good qualities in others, so that our own vices will not seem so great!

Jesus has a keen insight into human nature, when he talks about judgments: "Take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye." People who are proud and arrogant are usually eager to criticize and tear down others, lest their own place of prestige fail to stand secure. Of such persons Alexis Carrel speaks: "Pride and anger are harmful because they derange mental and nervous balance and falsify judgment. Egoism, avarice, and envy contract the personality, obscure the moral sense and dwarf the intelligence."¹

Rabbi Hillel offers sane advice about judgment: "Judge not thy neighbor till thou comest into his place." Thomas Carlyle's sympathy toward a blind beggar illustrates Hillel's principle: One day he with James Froude put a sixpence into a beggar's cup. Looking back at the beggar, he saw the beggar's dog leading his master to a public house to buy a drink. In recalling this incident Froude said, "I suppose I made some contemptuous remark, but Carlyle only said, 'Poor devil, if we knew how he came to be what he is, perhaps we would not be so hard on him.'" In the same spirit Benjamin Franklin writes in *Poor Richard's Almanac*:

E'er you remark another's sin,
Bid your own conscience look within.

There is a great difference between making honest evaluations of people and being censorious; the former is positive and constructive, the latter is negative and destructive. As we speak of "higher criticism" and "lower criticism" in biblical studies, so the two expressions can be used regarding the judgments we make of others. In higher criticism we make careful evaluations

¹ Op. cit., p. 105.

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of others for an honest end. A president of a college in seeking recommendations of a candidate for a teaching position expects correct testimonies. An athletic director must make evaluations of his players, to judge which are better than others. Lower criticism, however, is something very different: here criticisms are made mainly for the purpose of diminishing the stature of another person. Such derogatory criticisms are usually made by inferior persons who cannot raise themselves to the statures of others, so in self-defense they tear down others to their levels of living. It is these people whom Jesus has in mind when he says, "Judge not, that you be not judged." He is aware that such cruel judgments of others are usually criticisms those people are making of themselves in their insecurity. Censorious persons usually worry about others' criticisms of them. They resemble Napoleon, who after each battle would inquire, "What is Paris saying?"

Recently an author read an unfair, negative review of his newly published book. Excellent reviews of the same book had been written by some leading religious thinkers. In asking someone about the person who had made the noncomplimentary review of the book, the author was told: "He has not been very successful in his professional career, and has been disappointed in not getting his own writings published." As a refuge for his own inner professional frustrations, he was compensating for his own shortcomings by tearing down the book which he had reviewed.

Francis de Sales, Bishop of Geneva in the early part of the sixteenth century, was primarily a "director of souls." In his *Introduction to the Devout Life* he is advising his friend Philothea: "Never, verily never judge our neighbor. It is God that judges malefactors in public justice." At another time, as he meditates on judgments, he writes:

The remedies against rash judgments must be according to their different causes. There are some hearts naturally so bitter and harsh as to make everything bitter and harsh that they receive, converting

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judgment, as the prophet Amos says, into wormwood, by never judging their neighbors except with all rigor and harshness. These must seek the advice of a good spiritual physician because this bitterness of heart, being natural to them is subdued with difficulty.

The best admonition to those who possess this cruel censoriousness can be framed in a dozen words, "Be kind to everyone, for every man is fighting a hard battle!" They can further be reminded by Joaquin Miller's words:

In men whom men condemn as ill
I find so much of goodness still,
In men whom men pronounce divine
I find so much of sin and blot,
I do not dare to draw a line
Between the two, where God has not.²

35. *Ask Only for High Things*

(MATT. 7:7-11)

Every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

A PERSON will never know God's answers to his prayers unless he prays. To receive God's answer presupposes that a person ask God for something in prayer. The answer may be a "yes" or a "no"; and it may take months or years for the answer to be made. Monica prayed for years that her brilliant son Augustine might become a person who would realize his high potentialities; but it was not until Augustine was thirty-three years of age that he received Christian baptism. Shortly after his baptism his mother died at Ostia, the seaport of Rome. But her prayer of many years had been answered. She said to her son:

² From "Byron." Used by permission of Juanita Joaquina Miller.

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Son, for mine own part I have no further delight in any thing in this life. What I do here any longer, and to what end I am here, I know not, now that my hopes in this world are accomplished. One thing there was, for which I desired to linger for a while in this life, that I might see thee a Catholic Christian before I died. My God hath done this for me more abundantly, that I should now see thee withal, despising earthly happiness, become His servant: what do I here?

An answer to Monica's asking had been received, after thirty years of intercession.

Luke has the passages regarding those who ask, seek, and knock in their normal setting (Luke 11:9-13), following the Lord's Prayer and the persistent friend at midnight. This is the natural setting, for Jesus is seeking his followers through the parable of the persistent friend at midnight to keep on asking, never to give up. Monica well illustrates persistence in praying. But there are times when people in a moment of desperation pray, and because their prayers are not immediately answered as they wish, they lose faith in God.

Jesus is implying that God will give far more to those who ask of him than a good earthly father will give to his children. A friend of mine in college days was given a checkbook by his father, with the advice that he use it with discretion. He never had to ask his father for money, because his father had given him a means to obtain all he needed. Several years after my friend had finished college, he asked his father how much he had spent during his college days, to which his father answered, "I never kept track. I do not know." If an earthly father can show such generosity toward his son, how much more God desires to give to those of us who ask and who are willing to do God's will. If my college friend had misused the generosity of his father by lavish spending or indulgent living, the open account probably would have been canceled. We who ask, seek, knock in our praying to God will *receive, find, and have the*

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door opened to the degree that we in our persistence conform our wills to the will of God.

Jesus' teachings about prayer never intimate that prayer will change the mind of God or the laws of his universe; even the rain and the sun fall upon the good and the evil. Persistent praying is disciplined praying, a means by which we are able to place our wills under the discipline of God's will. Often-time in our persistence we find our asking, seeking, and knocking shifted into a higher and different direction of accomplishment. Phillips Brooks prayed that he might be a successful teacher, but in his persistent praying God said "no" to his prayer to become a teacher; and instead God redirected Phillips Brooks into becoming one of America's great preachers.

Persistent prayer ought to refine as for what a person should be praying, Edna D. Cheney describes how persevering prayer emerges into its highest focus:

At first I prayed for Light:
 Could I but see the way,
How gladly, swiftly would I walk
 To everlasting day!

And next I prayed for Strength:
 That I might tread the road
With firm, unfaltering feet, and win
 The heaven's serene abode.

And then I asked for Faith:
 Could I but trust my God,
I'd live enfolded in His peace,
 Though foes were all abroad.

But now I pray for Love:
 Deep love to God and man,
A living love that will not fail,
 However dark His plan.

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And Light and Strength and Faith
Are opening everywhere;
God only waited for me, till
I prayed the larger prayer.¹

And so it is with all of us! As we pray "the larger prayer," in which the great commandments of loving God and our neighbor channel us into the will of God, we understand more poignantly what Jesus meant when he said, "Every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened." Goethe said, "What we wish for in youth, comes in heaps on us in old age." What we persistently pray for, God has an uncanny way of bringing to us.

36. *All Else Is Interpretation*

(MATT. 7:12)

Whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.

NEGATIVE aspects of the Golden Rule—sometimes called the "Silver Rule"—are found in various religions. Confucianism says, "What you do not want done to yourself, do not to others." The Stoics taught: "Do not to another what you do not wish to happen to yourself." Rabbi Hillel, grandfather of Gamaliel the teacher of the apostle Paul, was once asked by a young Gentile who wished to become a proselyte of Judaism, "What is the essential commandment of the Torah?" Hillel replied, "Do not unto others as you would not that they should do unto you. All else is interpretation." Jesus, however, puts his ethical rule in positive terms, not in negative terms: "Whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them."

A person needs a warning as he interprets Jesus' Golden Rule

¹ "The Larger Prayer." Published by Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co.

in the Sermon on the Mount. I have heard people say, "All this world needs is the Golden Rule. If men were to live by it, we would be rid of all our problems." But the Christian religion cannot be accepted on such a simple premise. We do not *build* God's kingdom with a set of ethical rules; and certainly the kingdom of God is not to be erected upon one ethical tenet: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Those who listen to the Golden Rule, as taught by Jesus, should see in it an ethical maxim for Christians who accept God as their Father and Jesus Christ as their Lord and Master. It is not a rule to *build* the kingdom of God; rather it is one among many guideposts to show how transformed Christians ought to live with redemptive love in the world.

Were the Golden Rule taken by itself outside the Christian gospel, it might seem contrary to the other teachings of Jesus. "This Golden Rule with its philosophy of 'measure for measure,'" says Martin Dibelius, "is quite out of harmony with the heroic sentiments of our sayings."¹ Luke's attitude toward Golden Rule living is similar to the utterance of Aboth 1:3: "Be not as slaves that minister . . . with a view to receive recompense." "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? . . . If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? . . . Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful." (Luke 6:32, 33, 36.) Luke's version provides a commentary on how Christians ought to surpass the Golden Rule in Christian living. It resolves into "an ethic for heroes only"!

Jesus' words on the Golden Rule can be paraphrased for modern living: "*If I were you, how would I wish to be treated by people like myself?*" Whiting Williams, a steel executive, went to work for six months incognito as a laboring man in a steel mill so that he might appreciate how he as an executive ought to treat employees. In writing upon "What the Laboring Man Wants," he stressed that laboring men, like their em-

¹Op. cit., p. 53.

ployers, want to work, play, love, and worship. Sir William Beveridge of the London School of Economics interpreted how the ideal of the Golden Rule might work in industry. "Strikes and lockouts and other industrial stoppages could be put to an end pretty quickly if employers and employees would try to put themselves in thought and imagination in each other's places, and see the various questions at issue from each other's point of view."

"If I were you" ought to be put into effect as people of different religious viewpoints try to live together. The Golden Rule is never at work when religious groups say: "We are *the* Church!" "We are *the* selected race of God!" "We are *the* liberals, and all other truth is naïve!" I remember attending a Good Friday service in 1929 in Cambridge, England, to hear one of England's great preachers. He was ill and could not speak, but I recall his substitute, whose main thesis was to show why the Church of England was *the* Church of all Christendom. In this ecumenical age all of us need to put ourselves in other people's places, and with imagination appreciate the religious views they possess, and why they cherish them, and then cooperate.

If the Golden Rule is to have its Christian meaning, we who are Christians must treat the less fortunate with redemptive love, as we would wish to be treated if we were in their circumstances. Taken out of its Christian theological setting, "the so-called Golden Rule is leaden indeed"; to retain it in its warm, Christian atmosphere it remains on a high plane as one of the many guideposts by which Christians are led in their redemptive living among mankind.

37. *The Descent to Hell Is Easy*

(MATT. 7:13-14)

Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

VERGIL the Roman poet lived a generation before Jesus. Yet he depicts an insight similar to Jesus' words about the narrow gate which leads to life, and the wide and easy path which leads to destruction. In his *Aeneid* he writes:

The descent to hell is easy;
The gates stand open day and night;
But to re-climb the slope, and escape the outer air,
This indeed is a task.

Dryden's translation captures the rhythm of his words:

Smooth the descent and easy is the way;
The gates of Hell stand open night and day.
But to return, and view the cheerful skies,
In this the task and mighty labour lies.

Throughout his ministry Jesus is placing his followers before an *either-or* decision: they are to decide *either* for God and his kingdom or for the way of the world; they are to accept *either* the hard way of spiritual self-discipline and self-denial or the easy way of self-indulgence. Jesus is throwing out no easy invitation to those who are to become his followers; his design for living is for men and women willing to live heroically and, if necessary, to accept martyrdom. "There has never been any convenient crowd at the narrow gate," said Dean W. R. Inge. "In every generation many are called but few are chosen."

Rudolf Bultmann sees this decision for the Kingdom as the one which men find difficult to make wholeheartedly:

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This call to decision is the call to *repentance*. For most men cling to this world, and do not muster energy to decide wholly for God. They do desire the Kingdom, but they desire it along with other things—riches, and the respect of other men; they are not ready for repentance. When the invitation to the Kingdom comes to them they are claimed by various other interests. . . . The call to the Kingdom of God is an invitation which is at the same time a demand. Those who are invited must put the Kingdom of God above all other things. It makes its claim not on man's frivolous desire for pleasure but on his will. . . . A man therefore should think seriously before he decides to have anything to do with the invitation. A ready acceptance in words has no value; an act of will is required.¹

We are not to presume that anyone who decides to follow Jesus' design for living will immediately become a *perfect* Christian. The narrow gate that leads to life is a *goal*; it is a difficult *ideal* to strive for; yet he who decides for God's kingdom ought to be moving toward its attainment. To decide for the wider way of the world is an easier decision to make, but it eventually leads to unhappiness and moral destruction. Paul in one of his great moments describes the ultimate nature and end result of the two ways:

Now the works of the flesh [the easy, wide way] are plain: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. . . . But the fruit of the Spirit [the narrow, hard way] is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law (Gal. 5:19-23).

As man decides for either of the two ways described by Jesus, he ought to evaluate the end results of his choice.

One of the easy, wide ways that lead to destruction in the

¹ *Jesus and the Word* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), pp. 32-34. Used by permission of the publishers.

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United States has to do with the liquor traffic. In 1951 we spent in the United States \$60.49 per capita for liquor, a sum of \$9,150,000,000; while at the same time we spent \$5,837,643,000 (\$38.60 per capita) in educating the 25,000,000 youth of our nation. In the United States there are 4,000,000 alcoholics, 1,000,000 of whom are chronic alcoholics; there are also 3,000,000 "problem drinkers," individuals who in time of stress drink excessively. Tests for intoxication show that 60 per cent of our traffic accidents are caused by persons under the influence of alcohol; in 1951 approximately 2,000,000 people were killed and injured in traffic mishaps. In 1951, 1,882,160 crimes were committed in the United States (one major crime every 16.7 seconds); the majority of these crimes were traced to the use of intoxicating liquors. While the wrong use of alcoholic beverages is but one of the easy and wide ways which lead to destruction, it is one of the most perplexing problems of American culture. That "the descent to hell is easy" is obvious as we review the statistics of liquor figures.

Allan A. Hunter speaks of "Training Now" as necessary for Christian living. It is as necessary for Christians as for the athlete or the soldier preparing for combat duty. When the athlete decides to train for the one-hundred-yard dash, instead of living an easy life of self-indulgence, he must watch his sleeping habits, his diet, his daily use of energy. When men decide to enter God's kingdom, they too must go into spiritual training—the prayers they say, the community activities to which they give loyalty, the manner in which they control their inner emotions, the way they budget their time for worthwhile values, the way they place their wills in the hands of God, determine the fashion by which they move into the lasting enjoyment of the hard and narrow way which leads to abundant life!

Jesus implies that "the descent to hell is easy," and the narrow way is hard, but:

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To every man there openeth
A Way, and Ways, and a Way,
And the High Soul climbs the High Way,
And the Low Soul gropes the Low,
And in between on the misty flats,
The rest drift to and fro.
But to every man there openeth
A High Way and a Low,
And every man decideth
The Way his soul shall go.²

38. *Roots—And the Fruits of Religion*

(MATT. 7:15-23)

Beware of false prophets. . . . You will know them by their fruits.

A CRITIC from Australia said of us Americans, "You seem more concerned with the *fruits* of religion than with the *roots* of religion!" Such an evaluation of the American people is partially true, for some of us are listening to false prophets who promise an easy way out of our problems and perplexities into peace of mind and material success. Not long ago I received by mail an invitation to join a modern religious cult where by the payment of \$35 I could through its lessons find the spiritual secret to financial and mental achievement. The founder of the cult had through his methods arisen from an unsuccessful person to an individual who had a pipe organ in his home, ownership of the city's largest business building, beautiful cars, an elegant home. If I followed his methods of religious thinking, I was told, I could emulate his success!

In Jesus' day there were false prophets. Some were advocating the use of the sword against Rome as the way to the Kingdom. Others were saying, as in Jeremiah's time, "Peace, peace, when

² John Oxenham, "The Ways," from *Gentlemen—The King!* (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1928). Used by permission of the publishers.

there is no peace." Others were advocating loyalty to the Temple rites and ceremonial laws as the way to bring in God's kingdom. Jesus, however, is warning his followers that they must judge a leader by his character rather than by his glowing promises. How true Jesus' words seem related to recent events in world history! In 1935 an American friend of mine visiting in Germany was told by his relatives there how much they admired Adolf Hitler. On their farms Hitler was making it possible for them to have modern machinery and conveniences. Little did they see behind his glittering gifts the role of a false prophet who in less than ten years would bring destruction to the beloved Fatherland. By his fruits we now see him as a false prophet.

True leaders out of their deep character lead men into ways of noble living. In the Reformation days Martin Luther said, "It is not good works which make a good man, but a good man who does good works." A member of President Eisenhower's Cabinet recently described in a college convocation how the President starts each Cabinet meeting with silent prayer. After one of these periods of silent prayer, the President said to his friends, "Prayer is the finest kind of preparation for relationships with my associates." Jesus said about prayer and worship, "Not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." To have lasting fruits, a religion must have deep spiritual roots, which come not merely through form, ritual, repeating of creeds, but through a quiet personal worship which is heroically sincere and devout. "The prophetic ideal," says Thomas W. Manson, "is that right actions should be the spontaneous expression of a right disposition in man, the good fruit that grows on a good tree."¹

One of our modern "true prophets" is Frank Laubach, whose fruits have resulted in his teaching thousands of illiterate people to read and write. He tells how true worship goes into deep roots beyond merely saying, "Lord, Lord":

¹ *The Teaching of Jesus* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1931), p. 295.

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As I analyze myself I find several things happening to me as a result of these two months of strenuous effort to keep God in mind every minute. This concentration upon God is *strenuous*, but everything else has ceased to be so. I think more clearly, I forget less frequently. Things which I did with a strain before, I now do easily and with no effort whatever. I worry about nothing, and lose no sleep. I walk on air a good part of the time. Even the mirror reveals a new light in my eyes and face. I no longer feel in a hurry about anything. Everything goes right. Every minute I meet calmly as though it were not important. Nothing can go wrong excepting one thing. That is that God may slip from my mind if I do not keep on my guard. If He is there, the universe is with me. My task is simple and clear.²

What about the end of history? Jesus implies that what counts when "that day" comes is not what we accomplished but what we were. It will matter little whether we wrote great books, made great speeches, acquired great wealth, headed great industries, organized great churches, tilled great farms. What will count on "that day" is whether we possessed deep integrity and worthy character. At Buffalo, New York, recently, 325 laymen from Canada and the United States met to discuss "The Christian and His Daily Work." They were trying to find the religious obligations of the lawyer, the farmer, the teacher, the industrialist, the labor leader. Professor Robert L. Calhoun of Yale University sounded the keynote of the conference: "The layman's occupation is not something separate from religion, any more than hands are separate from mind and heart. Devoted work is the very flesh and bone of living religion, without which worship cannot live and grow."

Professor Calhoun was saying that the *fruits* of great living come from the *roots* of deep Christian meditation and worship, and that men, like trees, are known by their fruits!

² *Letters by a Modern Mystic* (New York: The Student Volunteer Movement, 1937), p. 24. Used by permission of the publishers.

39. *Goodness and Wisdom Are Twin-Born*

(MATT. 7:24-27)

Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock.

WILLIAM COWPER, English poet of the eighteenth century, says in his *Expostulation*:

Goodness and wisdom are twin-born, one heart
Must hold both sisters, never seen apart.

Socrates implies this when he says, "Knowledge is virtue." Jesus teaches this lesson in his words about the wise man who builds his house upon the rock of his ethical teachings. The parable of the houses built on sand and on rocks comes from the geography in Palestine:

In lands where houses have to be built on the mountainside, it is usually necessary to build out a solid revetment, which should be made continuous with native rock. If a careless or dishonest builder is content to run a wall across and to fill in the space with earth instead of with bricks, a heavy rainstorm may wash the earth away and leave the house to fall.¹

The Sermon on the Mount is a design for living in difficult times. Many people have a religion sufficient to meet ordinary living conditions; but when a crisis or a catastrophe suddenly comes into their lives, their religion is not deep enough or strong enough to support them. Whether a person uses or loses his religion in time of trouble is the test of the religious foundations upon which his life is built. Several years ago after a San Fran-

¹ T. H. Robinson, *The Gospel of Matthew* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1928), p. 66.

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cisco earthquake, buildings with deep foundations, held together with steel girders, were able to stand the earth tremors; those on shallow foundations, held together by wood, fell. America thought her economic structure was on solid foundations until 1929; and then in the depression years, as we discovered the difference between *real* wealth and *artificial* wealth, our material structure fell—and great was the fall thereof!

Civilization is being tested today as to whether her foundations are sound. Nazi Germany, built upon the sands of Friedrich Nietzsche's concept of the superman and the superrace, fell. Can Russian Communism, built upon the shifting sands of the atheistic materialism of Karl Marx and others, survive? Biblical history says, No. The verdict of the past shows how nations like Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, Greece, Rome, came to their great days of pompous glory, only in time to fall, for their cultures were not built upon the solid rock of moral religion. The Book of Daniel reminds us that as secular nations come and go, God's kingdom continues to exist; that the kingdom of God is the only structure built upon the solid rock of God's moral and spiritual stuff. Christians view Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount as more than wise sayings of philosophers; they are the will of God as spoken by Jesus Christ. "They no longer give expression to human wisdom as they would if regarded in isolation as proverbial sayings, but they present God's demand in time of crisis."²

Not only should civilization be built upon the solid rock of Jesus' teachings, if it is to stand; a person's character should also be constructed upon these precepts. Civilization is merely "man writ large"; for civilization is composed of many individuals. Every community tells the tragic stories of people whose lives have been built upon the sands: The home of a successful doctor is wrecked because of infidelity. A wife leaves normal home life for an institution of mentally sick people, because

² Martin Dibelius, *The Sermon on the Mount* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940), p. 65. Used by permission of the publishers.

her pride drove her to "keep up with the Joneses" as a way to bolster her feeling of inferiority. A father who cannot control his anger has antagonized his children, and has caused them to feel resentment toward their home. A middle-aged school-teacher is going to a medical doctor for recuperation, because daily worry and anxiety are using her best energies. Another woman by her gossip and censoriousness of people in the parish is continually causing her life to fester the health of her church and her community. These individuals, nominally members of the Christian church, might have built their lives upon the rock of Jesus' teachings. They had ears to hear, but they did not hear—and act. They had a blueprint for constructing lives that would last, given them in Jesus' words from the mountainside, but they failed to heed it.

Dominee Vos (in Alan Paton's *Too Late the Phalarope*) is preaching; his sermon is described by a listener:

Not those who backslid out of the church, he said, but those who backslid inside it, crucifying the Lord anew, praising Him with their lips but denying Him the true praise of their hearts and lives. And he invited us to judge ourselves, because the Lord had called him to be a shepherd not a judge, and to ask ourselves . . . whether we perhaps were held in honour of men . . . , but within were full of darkness. . . .

No, he had not come to preach about backsliding . . . , but about repentance and mercy, that a man might turn again, taking his part again in God's plan for the world, so that through a man, himself healed and refreshed, might flow a stream of living water to refresh us all, his home, his church, his town, his people, and the world. . . .

—That's the sickness of our times, he said, that we are afraid to believe it any more. We think of ourselves as men in chains, in the prison of our natures and the world, able to do nothing, but having to suffer everything. . . .

—It's the lie we tell to ourselves to hide the truth of our weakness and lack of faith. Is there not a gospel of God's love, that God's love can transform us, making us creators, not sufferers? . . .

The young dominee's voice rose.

—I am come that ye might have life, and have it more abundantly.³

Such seems the message of Jesus in his words from the mountainside. They are the precepts upon which men can construct lives to withstand the storms of life. Goodness and wisdom in a man form sound foundations on which to build a life—and also a civilization.

40. *A Persuasive Voice—Also an Imperative One*

(MATT. 7:28-29)

He taught them as one who had authority.

SIR Hall Caine is speaking about Jesus' teachings: "His preaching was convincing. His sermons, including the composite Sermon on the Mount, give a vivid picture of Jesus preaching. We hear him clearly. We can almost distinguish his voice. It is a persuasive voice, but it is also an imperative one. He speaks with authority." Martin Dibelius, New Testament scholar, writes similar words as he compares Jesus' teachings with those of Jewish literature:

Many of the words spoken by Jesus have parallels in the older Jewish literature or in the writings of the Jewish rabbis. Perhaps we may venture to say that if we knew more of these Jewish sayings, we should still have more parallels. Perhaps only the most radical of the sayings of the Sermon on the Mount would remain absolutely unique. On the other hand no rabbinic pronouncement ever became authoritative for the world outside Judaism. Only the relatively small group of sayings collected in the Sermon on the Mount has won authority for millions of men. This has happened only because it was Jesus who proclaimed these sayings. The Sermon on the

³ Used by permission of the publishers, Charles Scribner's Sons.

Mount is not an arbitrary collection of sayings, but it is Christ's own Gospel, and only as such has it achieved and does it maintain its authority for the Christians.¹

Modern man is confronted with several questions about the Sermon on the Mount. He asks: (1) How can I live such high ideals as are taught in its verses? (2) Why should I try to live them? (3) Why should I accept Jesus' authority behind these words? Such questions are basic, yet modern man also recognizes that he needs a tested ethical standard against which to evaluate himself. In Washington, D. C., is the Bureau of Standards, started in 1821 by John Quincy Adams. It was discovered that in the United States a pound of meat was a quarter of an ounce lighter in Massachusetts than in Maine, and a bushel basket had sixty-eight more cubic inches in South Carolina than in New York. Congress thus set up a bureau of weights and measures in order to have standards for the states. In similar fashion the Christian sees the Sermon on the Mount as a standard by which he is to judge his life. He views Jesus as the one who in his own life has set the standard. The Christian's "eye of faith" believes that Jesus lived the precepts taught in the Sermon on the Mount.

Some today accept Jesus' authority—"a persuasive voice—also an imperative one"—because they feel that through Jesus' performance of miracles God has placed his seal upon Jesus as his messenger to us. Others find Jesus authoritative because in the Bible he fulfills the hopes of the Law and the Prophets, and is called Son of God, Son of man, the Christ, the Word become flesh, Lord, and other titles which designate him as God's savior sent into the world. Others feel Jesus' sanction for them because he was born into the world of the Virgin Mary, thus setting him aside as one whom God uniquely sent into history. Others view Jesus as adopted by God at his baptism for his mission as a savior of men. Some interpret Jesus' authority as

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 80. Used by permission of the publishers, Charles Scribner's Sons.

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centered in his resurrection. Many view Jesus as authoritative because his way of living "works."

In the Gospel of Matthew men are never asked to *build* the kingdom of God with the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount. Nor are they asked to follow the ideals of "just a good carpenter." The Sermon on the Mount is meant for Christians who believe certain ideas about Jesus and about God. It is not an ethics which comes from Jesus, but from *Jesus Christ*. "Jesus meant his ethic to be a real design for living, not a blue-print for Utopia. Further, we must never forget that the Sermon on the Mount is an ethic for those who call Christ Lord and Saviour, for those who have entered the Kingdom of God and are promised the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit. . . . It is Design for Life in the Kingdom of God."²

The Christian wants three things from religion. First, he wants to get along with himself, so that he can conquer his selfishness, fears, resentments, and guilt. As he reads through the Sermon on the Mount, he finds basic psychological principles for living with himself—"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. . . . Do not resist one who is evil. . . . Do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. . . . If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you."

Second, a person also wants to get along with his fellow men. From the Sermon on the Mount he finds illustrations as to how a transformed Christian person ought to live with others through Christian love (agape). Third, an individual wants to find God as a power to work for righteousness in his life; for this Jesus suggests a "faith which can remove mountains." Hence as a person puts the personal, social, and devotional tests to the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, he finds an "authority"; his life is guided to great and adventuresome Christian living. Jesus as "a persuasive voice"

² Archibald M. Hunter, *A Pattern for Life* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), pp. 115-16. Used by permission of Westminster Press and the Student Christian Movement Press, Ltd.

becomes also "an imperative one." The Christian begins to understand, as he follows Jesus' insights, the meaning of W. H. Auden's words about Jesus:

He is the Truth.
Seek Him in the Kingdom of Anxiety;
You will come to a great city that has
expected your return for years.³

This "great city" has as its design for living the 111 verses in the Sermon on the Mount. "The divine origin of the teaching is involved in the fact that the life of Jesus is one of unreserved obedience to God's will," writes Thomas W. Manson, "and that his teaching is the echo of his life."⁴

³ From "For the Time Being, a Christmas Oratorio." Used by permission of the publishers, Random House.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 291. Used by permission of the publishers, Cambridge University Press.

The Sermon on the Mount is the blueprint for the life you seek—an unfailing pattern for the joy and serenity of Christian living.

In these forty brief meditations Dr. Kepler traces this blueprint so that all may clearly see the design and follow. The Beatitudes—unsurpassed guides to man's highest happiness—are explored. The Lord's Prayer—model for all our worship and prayer—is illuminated. Each sentence of Jesus' immortal sermon speaks to us with new force and clarity, and with closer relationship to the lives we lead.

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